The SILENT WATCHERS

England's Navy during the Great War
What It Is and What We Owe to It

BENNET COPPLESTONE

FASCISTI

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
D581.K73 C001 V
THE SILENT WATCHERS NEW YORK
3 4211 000020747

THE SILENT WATCHERS

By the Same Author

THE LOST NAVAL PAPERS

A series of exciting stories which reveal the English Secret Service as it really is—silent, unsleeping, and supremely competent.

"William Dawson is a great creation, a sheer delight. If Mr. Bennet Copplestone's intriguing book meets with half the success it deserves, the inimitable Sherlock Holmes will soon be outrivalled in popularity by the inscrutable William Dawson."—*Daily Telegraph.*

$1.50 Net

JITNY AND THE BOYS

"The book is full of the thoughts which make us proud to-day and help us to face to-morrow. Yes, 'Jitny' has my blessing."—*Punch.*

"Motoring people could do nothing better than sit down and have a spin, in imagination, by reading this book. A clinking motor-car story."
—*Daily Chronicle.*

$1.50 Net

NEW YORK - E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY

THE SILENT WATCHERS

England's Navy during the Great War: What It Is, and What We Owe to It

Kitchin, F. C.

By

BENNET COPPLESTONE pseud.

AUTHOR OF
"THE LOST NAVAL PAPERS"

"The Navy is a matter of machines only in so far as human beings can only achieve material ends by material means. I look upon the ships and the guns as secreted by the men just as a tortoise secretes its shell."—PROLOGUE.

STUDENTS LIBRARY
CONCORDIA TEACHERS COLLEGE
RIVER FOREST, ILLINOIS

NEW YORK

E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY

681 FIFTH AVENUE

Copyright, 1918
By E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY

All Rights Reserved

940.45942
K62s

First Printing, Sept., 1918
Second Printing, Oct., 1918

Printed in the United States of America

14846

NOTE

BETWEEN June, 1916, and February, 1918, I contributed a good many articles and sketches on Naval subjects to *The Cornhill Magazine*. They were not designed upon any plan or published in any settled sequence. As one article led up to another, and information came to me from my generously appreciative readers (many of whom were in the Service), I revised those which I had written and ventured to write still more. This book contains my *Cornhill* articles—revised and sometimes re-written in the light of wider information and kindly criticism—and several additional chapters which have not previously been published anywhere. I have endeavoured to weave into a connected series articles and sketches which were originally disconnected, and I have introduced new strands to give strength to the fabric. Through the whole runs a golden thread which I have called THE SECRET OF THE NAVY.

B. C.

March, 1918.

CONTENTS

PROLOGUE

		PAGE
	After the Battle	1
CHAPTER		
I.	A Band of Brothers	19
II.	The Coming of War	43
III.	The Great Victory	62
IV.	With the Grand Fleet: A North Sea "Stunt"	81
V.	With the Grand Fleet: The Terriers and the Rats	99
VI.	The Mediterranean: A Success and a Failure	114
VII.	In the South Seas: The Disaster off Coronel	129
VIII.	In the South Seas: Cleaning Up	149
IX.	How the "Sydney" Met the "Emden"	174
X.	From Strength to Strength	196
XI.	The Cruise of the "Glasgow": Part I—Rio to Coronel	216
XII.	The Cruise of the "Glasgow": Part II—Coronel to Juan Fernandez	241
XIII.	The Battle of the Giants: Part I	265
XIV.	The Battle of the Giants: Part II	288

EPILOGUE

	Lieutenant Cæsar	321

LIST OF MAPS

	PAGE
The North Sea	67
The Mediterranean Operations	119
The South Seas	139
How the "Sydney" Met the "Emden"	178
The "Sydney-Emden" Action	193
The Cruise of the "Glasgow"	219
The Pacific: Von Spee's Concentration	231
The Cruise of the "Glasgow"	253
The Battle of the Giants	271

THE SILENT WATCHERS

PROLOGUE

AFTER THE BATTLE

"CÆSAR," said a Sub-lieutenant to his friend, a temporary Lieutenant R.N.V.R., who at the outbreak of war had been a classical scholar at Oxford, "you were in the thick of our scrap yonder off the Jutland coast. You were in it every blessed minute with the battle cruisers, and must have had a lovely time. Did you ever, Cæsar, try to write the story of it?"

It was early in June of 1916, and a group of officers had gathered near the ninth hole of an abominable golf course which they had themselves laid out upon an island in the great landlocked bay wherein reposed from their labours long lines of silent ships. It was a peaceful scene. Few even of the battleships showed the scars of battle, though among them were some which the Germans claimed to be at the bottom of the sea. There they lay, coaled, their magazines refilled, ready at short notice to issue forth with every eager man and boy standing at his action station. And while all waited for the next call, officers went ashore, keen, after the restrictions upon free

exercise, to stretch their muscles upon the infamous golf course. It was, I suppose, one of the very worst courses in the world. There were no prepared tees, no fairway, no greens. But there was much bare rock, great tufts of coarse grass greedy of balls, wide stretches of hard, naked soil destructive of wooden clubs, and holes cut here and there of approximately the regulation size. Few officers of the Grand Fleet, except those in Beatty's Salt of the Earth squadrons, far to the south, had since the war began been privileged to play upon more gracious courses. But the Sea Service, which takes the rough with the smooth, with cheerful and profane philosophy, accepted the home-made links as a spirited triumph of the handy-man over forbidding nature.

"Yes," said the naval volunteer, "I tried many times, but gave up all attempts as hopeless. I came up here to get first-hand material, and have sacrificed my short battle leave to no purpose. The more I learn the more helplessly incapable I feel. I can describe the life of a ship, and make you people move and speak like live things. But a battle is too big for me. One might as well try to realise and set on paper the Day of Judgment. All I did was to write a letter to an old friend, one Copplestone, beseeching him to make clear to the people at home what we really had done. I wrote it three days after the battle. Here it is."

Lieutenant Cæsar drew a paper from his pocket and read as follows:

"My dear Copplestone,—Picture to yourself our feelings. On Wednesday we were in the fiery hell of the greatest naval action ever fought. A

real Battle of the Giants. Beatty's and Hood's battle cruisers—chaffingly known as the Salt of the Earth—and Evan Thomas's squadron of four fast Queen Elizabeths had fought for two hours the whole German High Seas Fleet. Beatty, in spite of his heavy losses, had outmanœuvred Fritz's battle cruisers and enveloped the German line. The Fifth Battle Squadron had stalled off the German Main Fleet, and led them into the net of Jellicoe, who, coming up, deployed between Evan Thomas and Beatty, though he could not see either, crossed the T of the Germans in the beautifullest of beautiful manœuvres, and had them for a moment as good as sunk. But the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away; it is sometimes difficult to say Blessed be the Name of the Lord. For just when we most needed full visibility the mist came down thick, the light failed, and we were robbed of the fruits of victory when they were almost in our hands. It was hard, hard, bitterly hard. But we had done the utmost which the Fates permitted. The enemy, after being harried all night by destroyers, had got away home in torn rags, and we were left in supreme command of the North Sea, a command more complete and unchallengeable than at any moment since the war began. For Fritz had put out his full strength, all his unknown cards were on the table, we knew his strength and his weakness, and that he could not stand for a moment against our concentrated power. All this we had done, and rejoiced mightily. In the morning we picked up from Poldhu the German wireless claiming the battle as a glorious victory—at which we laughed loudly. But there was no laughter when in the

afternoon Poldhu sent out an official message from our own Admiralty which, from its clumsy wording and apologetic tone, seemed actually to suggest that we had had the devil of a hiding. Then when we arrived at our bases came the newspapers with their talk of immense losses, and of bungling, and of the Grand Fleet's failure! Oh, it was a monstrous shame! The country which depends utterly upon us for life and honour, and had trusted us utterly, had been struck to the heart. We had come back glowing, exalted by the battle, full of admiration for the skill of our leaders and for the serene intrepidity of our men. We had seen our ships go down and pay the price of sea command—pay it willingly and ungrudgingly as the Navy always pays. Nothing that the enemy had done or could do was able to hurt us, but we had been mortally wounded in the house of our friends. It will take days, weeks, perhaps months, for England and the world to be made to understand and to do us justice. Do what you can, old man. Don't delay a minute. Get busy. You know the Navy, and love it with your whole soul. Collect notes and diagrams from the scores of friends whom you have in the Service; they will talk to you and tell you everything. I can do little myself. A Naval Volunteer who fought through the action in a turret, looking after a pair of big guns, could not himself see anything outside his thick steel walls. Go ahead at once, do knots, and the fighting Navy will remember you in its prayers."

The attention of others in the group had been drawn to the reader and his letter, and when

Lieutenant Cæsar stopped, flushed and out of breath, there came a chorus of approving laughter.

"This temporary gentleman is quite a literary character," said a two-ring Lieutenant who had been in an exposed spotting top throughout the whole action, "but we've made a Navy man of him since he joined. That's a dashed good letter, and I hope you sent it."

"Yes," said Cæsar. "But while I was hesitating, wondering whether I would risk the lightning of the Higher Powers, a possible court martial, and the loss of my insecure wavy rings, the business was taken out of my hands by this same man to whom I was wanting to write. He got moving on his own account, and now, though the battle is only ten days old, the country knows the rights of what we did. When it comes to describing the battle itself, I make way for my betters. For what could I see? On the afternoon of May 31st, we were doing gun drill in my turret. Suddenly came an order to put lyddite into the guns and follow the Control. During the next two hours as the battle developed we saw nothing. We were just parts of a big human machine intent upon working our own little bit with faultless accuracy. There was no leisure to think of anything but the job in hand. From beginning to end I had no suggestion of a thrill, for a naval action in a turret is just gun drill glorified, as I suppose it is meant to be. The enemy is not seen; even the explosions of the guns are scarcely heard. I never took my ear-protectors from their case in my pocket. All is quiet, organised labour, sometimes very hard labour when for any reason one has to hoist the great shells by the hand purchase. It is extraor-

dinary to think that I got fifty times more actual excitement out of a squadron regatta months ago than out of the greatest battle in naval history."

"That's quite true," said the Spotting Officer, "and quite to be expected. Battleship fighting is not thrilling except for the very few. For nine-tenths of the officers and men it is a quiet, almost dull routine of exact duties. For some of us up in exposed positions in the spotting tops or on the signal bridge, with big shells banging on the armour or bursting alongside in the sea, it becomes mighty wetting and very prayerful. For the still fewer, the real fighters of the ship in the conning tower, it must be absorbingly interesting. But for the true blazing rapture of battle one has to go to the destroyers. In a battleship one lives like a gentleman until one is dead, and takes the deuce of a lot of killing. In a destroyer one lives rather like a pig, and one dies with extraordinary suddenness. Yet the destroyer officers and men have their reward in a battle, for then they drink deep of the wine of life. I would sooner any day take the risks of destroyer work, tremendous though they are, just for the fun which one gets out of it. It was great to see our boys round up Fritz's little lot. While you were in your turret, and the Sub. yonder in control of a side battery, Fritz massed his destroyers like Prussian infantry and tried to rush up close so as to strafe us with the torpedo. Before they could get fairly going, our destroyers dashed at them, broke up their masses, buffeted and hustled them about exactly like a pack of wolves worrying sheep, and with exactly the same result. Fritz's destroyers either clustered together like sheep or scattered flying

to the four winds. It was just the same with the light cruisers as with the destroyers. Fritz could not stand against us for a moment, and could not get away, for we had the heels of him and the guns of him. There was a deadly slaughter of destroyers and light cruisers going on while we were firing our heavy stuff over their heads. Even if we had sunk no battle cruisers or battleships, the German High Seas Fleet would have been crippled for months by the destruction of its indispensable 'cavalry screen.'"

As the Spotting Officer spoke, a Lieutenant-Commander holed out on the last jungle with a mashie—no one uses a putter on the Grand Fleet's private golf course—and approached our group, who, while they talked, were busy over a picnic lunch.

"If you pigs haven't finished all the bully beef and hard tack," said he, "perhaps you can spare a bite for one of the blooming 'eroes of the X Destroyer Flotilla." The speaker was about twenty-seven, in rude health, and bore no sign of the nerve-racking strain through which he had passed for eighteen long-drawn hours. The young Navy is as unconscious of nerves as it is of indigestion. The Lieutenant-Commander, his hunger satisfied, lighted a pipe and joined in the talk.

"It was hot work," said he, "but great sport. We went in sixteen and came out a round dozen. If Fritz had known his business, I ought to be dead. He can shoot very well till he hears the shells screaming past his ears, and then his nerves go. Funny thing how wrong we've been about him. He is smart to look at, fights well in a crowd, but cracks when he has to act on his own

without orders. When we charged his destroyers and ran right in he just crumpled to bits. We had a batch of him nicely herded up, and were laying him out in detail with guns and mouldies, when there came along a beastly intrusive Control Officer on a battle cruiser and took him out of our mouths. It was a sweet shot, though. Someone—I don't know his name, or he would hear of his deuced interference from me—plumped a salvo of 12-inch common shell right into the brown of Fritz's huddled batch. Two or three of his destroyers went aloft in scrap-iron, and half a dozen others were disabled. After the first hour his destroyers and light cruisers ceased to be on the stage; they had flown quadrivious—there's an ormolu word for our classical volunteer—and we could have a whack at the big ships. Later, at night, it was fine. We ran right in upon Fritz's after-guard of sound battleships and rattled them most tremendous. He let fly at us with every bally gun he had, from 4-inch to 14, and we were a very pretty mark under his searchlights. We ought to have been all laid out, but our loss was astonishingly small, and we strafed two of his heavy ships. Most of his shots went over us."

"Yes," called out the Spotting Officer, "yes, they did, and ricochetted all round us in the Queen Elizabeths. There was the devil of a row. The firing in the main action was nothing to it. All the while you were charging, and our guns were masked for fear of hitting you, Fritz's bonbons were screaming over our upper works and making us say our prayers out loud in the Spotting Tops. You'd have thought we were at church. I was in the devil of a funk, and could hear my teeth

rattling. It is when one is fired on and can't hit back that one thinks of one's latter end."

"Did any of you see the *Queen Mary* go?" asked a tall thin man with the three rings of a Commander. "Our little lot saw nothing of the first part of the battle; we were with the K.G. Fives and Orions."

"I saw her," spoke a Gunnery Lieutenant, a small, quiet man with dreamy, introspective eyes —the eyes of a poet turned gunner. "I saw her. She was hit forrard, and went in five seconds. You all know how. It was a thing which won't bear talking about. The *Invincible* took a long time to sink, and was still floating bottom up when Jellicoe's little lot came in to feed after we and the Salt of the Earth had eaten up most of the dinner. I don't believe that half the Grand Fleet fired a shot."

There came a savage growl from officers of the main Battle Squadrons, who, invited to a choice banquet, had seen it all cleared away before their arrival. "That's all very well," grumbled one of them; "the four Q.E.s are getting a bit above themselves because they had the luck of the fair. They didn't fight the High Seas Fleet by their haughty selves because they wanted to, you bet."

The Gunnery Lieutenant with the dreamy eyes smiled. "We certainly shouldn't have chosen that day to fight them on. But if the *Queen Elizabeth* herself had been with us, and we had had full visibility—with the horizon a hard dark line—we would have willingly taken on all Fritz's 12-inch Dreadnoughts and thrown in his battle cruisers."

"That's the worst of it," grumbled the Commander, very sore still at having tasted only of

the skim milk of the battle; "naval war is now only a matter of machines. The men don't count as they did in Nelson's day."

"Excuse me, sir," remarked the Sub-Lieutenant; "may I say a word or two about that? I have been thinking it out."

There came a general laugh. The Sub-Lieutenant, twenty years of age, small and dark and with the bright black eyes of his mother—a pretty little lady from the Midi de la France whom his father had met and married in Paris—did not look like a philosopher, but he had the clear-thinking, logical mind of his mother's people.

"Think aloud, my son," said the Commander. "As a living incarnation of l'Entente Cordiale, you are privileged above those others of the gun-room."

The light in the Sub's eyes seemed to die out as his gaze turned inwards. He spoke slowly, carefully, sometimes injecting a word from his mother's tongue which could better express his meaning. He looked all the while towards the sea, and seemed scarcely to be conscious of an audience of seniors. His last few sentences were spoken wholly in French.

"No—naval war is a war of men, as it always was and always will be. For what are the machines but the material expression of the souls of the men? Our ships are better and faster than the German ships, our guns heavier and more accurate than theirs, our gunners more deadly than their gunners, because our Navy has the greater human soul. The Royal Navy is not a collection of lifeless ships and guns imposed upon men by some external power as the Kaiser sought to impose a fleet upon the Germans, a nation of landsmen.

The Navy is a matter of machines only in so far as human beings can only achieve material ends by material means. I look upon the ships and guns as secreted by the men just as a tortoise secretes its shell. They are the products of naval thought, and naval brains, and, above all, of that ever-expanding naval soul (*l'esprit*) which has been growing for a thousand years. Our ships yonder are materially new, the products almost of yesterday, but really they are old, centuries old; they are the expression of a naval soul working, fermenting, always growing through the centuries, always seeking to express itself in machinery. Naval war is an art, the art of men, and where in the world will one find men like ours, officers like ours? Have you ever thought whence come those qualities which one sees glowing every day in our men, from the highest Admiral to the smallest ship boy—have you ever thought whence they come?"

He paused, still looking out to sea. His companions, all of them his superiors in rank and experience, stared at him in astonishment, and one or two laughed. But the Commander signalled for silence. "Et aprês," he asked quietly; "d'où viennent ces qualités?" Unconsciously he had sloughed the current naval slang and spoke in the native language of the Sub.

The effect was not what he had expected. At the sound of the Commander's voice speaking in French the Sub-Lieutenant woke up, flushed, and instantly reverted to his English self. "I am sorry, sir. I got speaking French, in which I always think, and when I talk French I talk the most frightful rot."

"I am not so sure that it was rot. Your theory seems to be that we are, in the naval sense, the heirs of the ages, and that no nation that has not been through our centuries-old mill can hope to stand against us. I hope that you are right. It is a comforting theory."

"But isn't that what we all think, sir, though we may not put it quite that way? Most of us know that our officers and men are of unapproachable stuff in body and mind, but we don't seek for a reason. We accept it as an axiom. I've tried to reason the thing out because I'm half French; and also because I've been brought up among dogs and horses and believe thoroughly in heredity. It's all a matter of breeding."

"The Sub's right," broke in the Gunnery Lieutenant with the poet's eyes; "though a Sub who six months ago was a snotty has no business to think of anything outside his duty. The Service would go to the devil if the gun-room began to talk psychology. We excuse it in this Sub here for the sake of the Entente Cordiale, of which he is the living embodiment; but had any other jawed at us in that style I would have sat upon his head. Of course he is right, though it isn't our English way to see through things and define them as the French do. No race on earth can touch us for horses or dogs or prize cattle—or Navy men. It takes centuries to breed the boys who ran submarines through the Dardanelles and the Sound and stayed out in narrow enemy waters for weeks together. Brains and nerves and sea skill can't be made to order even by a German Kaiser. Navy men should marry young and choose their women from sea families; and then

their kids won't need to be taught. They'll have the secret of the Service in their blood."

"That's all very fine," observed a Marine Lieutenant reflectively; "but who is going to pay for it all? We can't. I get 7*s.* 6*d.* a day, and shall have 11*s.* in a year or two; it sounds handsome, but would hardly run to a family. Few in the Navy have any private money, so how can we marry early?"

"Of course we can't as things go now," said the Gunnery Lieutenant. "But some day even the Admiralty will discover that the English Navy will become a mere list of useless machines unless the English naval families can be kept up on the lower deck as well as in the ward-room and gun-room. Why, look at the names of our submarine officers whenever they get into the papers for honours. They are always salt of the sea, names which have been in the Navy List ever since there was a List. You may read the same names in the Trafalgar roll and back to the Dutch wars. Most of us were Pongos before that—shore Pongos who went afloat with Blake or Prince Rupert—but then we became sailors, and so remained, father to son. I can only go back myself to the Glorious First of June, but some of us here in the Grand Fleet date from the Stuarts at least. It is jolly fine to be of Navy blood, but not all plum jam. One has such a devil of a record to live up to. In my term at Dartmouth there was a poor little beast called Francis Drake—a real Devon Drake, a genuine antique—but what a load of a name to carry! Thank God, my humble name doesn't shine out of the history books. And as with the officers, so with the sea-

men. Half of them come from my own country of Devon—the cradle of the Navy. They are in the direct line from Drake's buccaneers. Most of the others come from the ancient maritime counties of the Channel seaboard, where the blood of everyone tingles with Navy salt. The Germans can build ships which are more or less accurate copies of our own, but they can't breed the men. That is the whole secret."

The Lieutenant-Commander, whose war-scarred destroyer lay below refitting, laughed gently. "There's a lot in all that, more than we often realise when we grumble at the cursed obstinacy of our old ratings, but even you do not go back far enough. It is the old blood of the Vikings and sea-pirates in us English which makes us turn to the sea; the rest is training. In no other way can you explain the success of the Fringes, the mine-sweepers, and patrols, most of them manned by naval volunteers who, before the war, had never served under the White Ensign nor seen a shot fired. What is our classical scholar here, Cæsar, but a naval volunteer whom Whale Island and natural intelligence have turned into a gunner? But as regards the regular Navy, the Navy of the Grand Fleet, you are right. Pick your boys from the sea families, catch them young, pump them full to the teeth with the Navy Spirit —*l'esprit marin* of our bi-lingual Sub here—make them drunk with it. Then they are all right. But they must never be allowed to think of a darned thing except of the job in hand. The Navy has no use for men who seek to peer into their own souls. They might do it in action and discover blue funk. We want them to be no more

conscious of their souls than of their livers. Though I admit that it is devilish difficult to forget one's liver when one has been cooped up in a destroyer for a week. It is not nerve that Fritz lacks so much as a kindly obedient liver. He is an iron-gutted swine, and that is partly why he can't run destroyers and submarines against us. The German liver is a thing to wonder at. Do you know——" but here the Lieutenant-Commander became too Rabelaisian for my delicate pen.

The group had thinned out during this exercise in naval analysis. Several of the officers had resumed their heart-and-club-breaking struggle with the villainous golf course, but the Sub, the volunteer Lieutenant, and the Pongo (Marine) still sat at the feet of their seniors. "May I say how the Navy strikes an outsider like me?" asked Cæsar diffidently. Whale Island, which had forgotten all other Latin authors, had given him the name as appropriate to one of his learning.

"Go ahead," said the Commander generously. "All this stuff is useful enough for a volunteer; without the Pongos and Volunteers to swallow our tall stories, the Navy would fail of an audience. The snotties know too much."

"I was going to speak of the snotties," said Cæsar, "who seem to me to be even more typical of the Service than the senior officers. They have all its qualities, emphasised, almost comically exaggerated. I do not know whether they are never young or that they never grow old, but there is no essential difference in age and in knowledge between a snotty six months out of cadet training and a Commander of six years' standing. They rag after dinner with equal zest, and seem to be

equally well versed in the profound technical details of their sea work. Perhaps it is that they are born full of knowledge. The snotties interest me beyond every type that I have met. Their manners are perfect and in startling contrast with those of the average public school boy of fifteen or sixteen—even in College at Winchester—and they combine their real irresponsible youthfulness with a grave mask of professional learning which is delightful to look upon. I have before me the vision of a child of fifteen with tousled yellow hair and a face as glum as a sea-boot, sitting opposite to me in the machine which took us back one day to the boat, smoking a 'fag' with the clumsiness which betrayed his lack of practice, in between bites of 'goo' (in this instance Turkish Delight), of which I had seen him consume a pound. He looked about ten years old, and in a husky, congested voice, due to the continual absorption of sticky food, he described minutely to me the method of conning a battleship in manœuvres and the correct amount to allow for the inertia of the ship when the helm is centred; he also explained the tactical handling of a squadron during sub-calibre firing. That snotty was a sheer joy, and the Navy is full of him. He's gone himself, poor little chap—blown to bits by a shell which penetrated the deck."

"In time, Cæsar," said the Commander, "by strict attention to duty you will become a Navy man. But we have talked enough of deep mysteries. It was that confounded Sub, with his French imagination, who started us. What I really wish someone would tell me is this: what was the 'northern enterprise' that Fritz was

on when we chipped in and spoilt his little game?"

"It does not matter," said the Gunnery Lieutenant. "We spoilt it, anyhow. The dear old newspapers talk of his losses in big ships as if they were all that counted. What has really crippled him has been the wiping out of his destroyers and fast new cruisers. Without them he is helpless. It was a great battle, much more decisive than most people think, even in the Grand Fleet itself. It was as decisive by sea as the Marne was by land. We have destroyed Fritz's mobility."

The men rose and looked out over the bay. There below them lay their sea homes, serene, invulnerable, and about them stretched the dull, dour, treeless landscape of their northern fastness. Their minds were as peaceful as the scene. As they looked a bright light from the compass platform of one of the battleships began to flicker through the sunshine—dash, dot, dot, dash. "There goes a signal," said the Commander. "You are great at Morse, Pongo. Read what it says, my son."

The Lieutenant of Marines watched the flashes, and as he read grinned capaciously. "It is some wag with a signal lantern," said he. "It reads: Question—Daddy,—what—did—you—do—in—the—Great—War?"

"I wonder," observed the Sub-Lieutenant, "what new answer the lower deck has found to that question. Before the battle their reply was: 'I was kept doubling round the decks, sonny.'"

"There goes the signal again," said the Pongo; "and here comes the answer." He read it out

slowly as it flashed word after word: " 'I LAID THE GUNS TRUE, SONNY.' "

"And a dashed good answer, too," cried the Commander heartily.

"That would make a grand fleet signal before a general action," remarked the Gunnery Lieutenant. "I don't care much for Nelson's Trafalgar signal. It was too high-flown and sentimental for the lower deck. It was aimed at the history books, rather than at old tarry-breeks of the fleet a hundred years ago. No—there could not be a better signal than just 'Lay the Guns True'—carry out your orders precisely, intelligently, faultlessly. What do you say, my Hun of a classical volunteer?"

"It could not be bettered," said Cæsar.

"I will make a note of it," said the Gunnery Lieutenant, "against the day, when as a future Jellicoe, I myself shall lead a new Grand Fleet into action."

CHAPTER I

A BAND OF BROTHERS

"We few, we happy few, we band of brothers."—*King Henry V.*

My boyhood was spent in Devon, the land of Drake and the home of the Elizabethan Navy. A deep passion for the Sea Service is in my blood, though, owing to family circumstances, I was not able to indulge my earliest ambition to become myself one of the band of brothers who serve under the White Ensign. My elder brother lived and died afloat. Two of my sons, happier than their father, are privileged to play their parts in the great ships of the Fleets. So that, though not in the Service, I am of it, by ties of blood and by ties of the earliest association. Whenever I have sought to penetrate its mysteries and to interpret them to my fellow countrymen, my motive has never been that of mere idle curiosity.

The Royal Navy wields, and has always wielded, a great material force, but the secret of its strength lies not in the machines with which it has equipped itself in the various stages of its development. Vast and terrible as are the ships and the guns, they would be of little worth if their design and skilful employment were not inspired by that spiritual force, compounded of tradition, training, devotion and discipline, which I call the Soul of

the Navy. In the design of its weapons, in its mastery of their use, above all in its consummate seamanship, the Royal Navy has in all ages surpassed its opponents; but it has done these things not through some fortuitous gift of the Sea Gods, but because of the never-failing development of its own spirit. It has always been at a great price, in the sacrifice of ease and in the outpouring of the lives of men, that the Navy has won for itself and for us the freedom of the seas. Those who reckon navies in ships and guns, in weight of metal and in broadside fire, while leaving out of account the spirit and training and devotion of the men, can never understand the Soul of the Navy. For all these material things are the expression of the Soul; they are not the Soul itself.

The Navy is still the old English Navy of the southern maritime counties of England. It has become the Navy of Great Britain, the Navy of the British Empire, but in spirit, and to a large extent in hereditary personnel, it remains the English Navy of the Narrow Seas. Many counties play a great part in its equipment, but to me it is always the Navy of my own land of Devon; officers and men are the lineal successors of those bold West Country seamen who in their frail barks ranged the wide seas hundreds of years ago and first taught to us and to the world the meaning of the expression "sea communications."

There is not an officer in the permanent service of the Fleets of to-day who was not trained in Devon. On the southern seaboard of that county, set upon a steep slope overlooking the mouth of the most lovely of rivers, stands the Naval College

in which are being trained those who will guide our future Fleets. A little way to the west lies one of the greatest of naval ports and arsenals. From my county of Devon comes half the Navy of to-day, half the men of the Fleet, be they warrant officers, seamen or engineers. The atmosphere of Devon, soft and sleepy as it may appear to a stranger, is electric with the spirit of Drake, which is the spirit of Nelson, which is the spirit of the boys of Dartmouth. For generation after generation, in the old wooden hulks *Britannia* and *Hindustan,* and afterwards in the Naval College on the heights, the cadets during their most impressionable years have breathed in the spirit of the Navy. I have often visited them there and loved them; my brother, who worked among them and taught them, died there, and is buried in the little cemetery which crowns the hill where, years ago in a blinding snowstorm, I stood beside his open grave and heard the Last Post wail above his body. I have always envied him that great privilege, to die in the service of the Navy and to be buried within hail of the boys whom he loved.

The cadets of Dartmouth have learned that the Sea Service is an exacting and most jealous mistress who brooks no rival. They have learned that the Service is everything and themselves nothing. They have learned that only by humbly submitting themselves to be absorbed into the Service can they be deemed to be worthy of that Service. The discipline of the Navy is no cast-iron system imposed by force and punishment upon unwilling men; there is nothing in it of Prussian Militarism. It is rather the willing subordination of proud

free men to the dominating interests of a Service to which they have dedicated their lives. The note of their discipline is "The Service first, last, and all the time." The Navy resembles somewhat a religious Order, but in the individual subordination of body, heart, brains and soul there is nothing of servitude. The Naval officer is infinitely proud and infinitely humble. Infinitely proud of his Service, infinitely humble in himself. If an officer through error, however pardonable, loses his ship—and very young officers have command of ships—and in the stern, though always sympathetic, judgment of his fellows he must temporarily be put upon the shelf, he does not grumble or repine. He does not write letters to the papers upon his grievances. He accepts the judgment loyally, even proudly, and strives to merit a return to active employment. No fleshpots in the outer world, no honours or success in civil employment, ever compensate the naval officer for the loss of his career at sea.

From the circumstances of their lives, so largely spent among their fellows at sea or in naval harbours, and from their upbringing in naval homes and training ships, officers and men grow into a class set apart, dedicated as Followers of the Sea, in whose eyes the dwellers in cities appear as silly chatterers and hucksterers, always seeking after some vain thing, be it wealth or rank or fame. The discipline of the Navy is, like its Soul, apart and distinct from anything which we know on land. It is very strict but also very human. There is nothing in it of Caste. "I expect," said Drake, "the gentlemen to draw with the mariners." Drake allowed of no dis-

tinction between "gentlemen" and "mariners" except that "gentlemen" were expected always to surpass the "mariners" in tireless activity, cheerful endurance of hardships, and unshakable valour in action. Drake could bear tenderly with the diseased grumbling of a scurvy-stricken mariner, but the gentleman adventurer who "groused" was in grievous peril of a rope and a yard arm. The gentlemen adventurers have given place to professional naval officers, the mariners have become the long-service trained seamen in their various grades who have given their lives to the Navy, but the spirit of Drake endures to this day. The Gentlemen are expected to draw with the Mariners.

When a thousand lives and a great ship may be lost by the lapse from vigilance of one man, very strict discipline is a vital necessity. But as with officers so with men it is the discipline of cheerful, willing obedience. The spirit of the Navy is not the spirit of a Caste. It burns as brightly in the seaman as in the lieutenant, in the ship's boy as in the midshipman, in the warrant officer as in the "Owner." It is a discipline hammered out by the ceaseless fight with the sea. The Navy is always on active service; it is always waging an unending warfare with the forces of the sea; the change from a state of peace to a state of war means only the addition of one more foe—and if he be a gallant and chivalrous foe he is welcomed gladly as one worthy to kill and to be killed.

Catch boys young, inure them to Naval discipline, and teach them the value of it, and to them it will become part of the essential fabric of

their lives. A good example of how men of Naval training cling to the discipline of the Service as to a firm unbreakable rope was shown in Captain Scott's South Polar expeditions. Some of the officers, and practically the whole of the crews, were lent by the Navy, but the expeditions themselves were under auspices which were not naval. At sea Captain Scott's legal authority was that of a merchant skipper, on land during his exploring expeditions he had no legal authority at all. Yet all the officers and men, knowing that their lives depended upon willing subordination, agreed that the discipline both at sea and on land should be that of the Navy to which most of them belonged. The ships were run exactly as if they had flown the White Ensign, and as if their companions were under the Navy Act. Strict though it may be, there is nothing arbitrary about naval discipline, and those who have tested it in peace and war know its quality of infinite endurance under any strain.

The Navy is a small Service, small in numbers, and to this very smallness is partly due the beauty of its Soul. For it is a picked Service, and only by severe selection in their youth can those be chosen who are worthy to remain among its permanent members. The professional officers and men number only some 150,000, and the great temporary war expansion—after the inclusion of Naval Reservists, Naval Volunteers, and the Division for service on land, did little more than treble the active list. The Navy, even then, bore upon its rolls names less than one-twelfth as numerous as in those legions who were drafted into the Army. Yet this small professional Navy,

by reason of its Soul and the vast machines which that Soul secretes and employs with supreme efficiency, dominated throughout the war the seas of the whole world. The Navy has for so long been a wonder and a miracle that we have ceased to be thrilled by it; we take it for granted; but it remains no less a wonder and a miracle.

Many causes have combined to make this little group—this few, this happy few, this band of brothers—the most splendid human force which the world has ever seen. The Naval Service is largely hereditary. Officers and men come from among those who have served the sea for generations. In the Navy List of to-day one may read names which were borne upon the ships' books of hundreds of years ago. And since the tradition of the sea plays perhaps the greatest part in the development of the Naval Soul, this continuity of family service, on the lower deck as in the wardroom and gun room, needs first to be emphasised. The young son of an officer, of a warrant-officer, of a seaman, or of a marine, enters the Service already more than half trained. He has the spirit of the Service in his blood, and its collective honour is already his own private honour. I remember years ago a naval officer said to me sorrowfully, "My only son must go into the Service, and yet I fear that he is hardly fit for it. He is delicate, shy, almost timid. But what can one do?"

"Is it necessary?" I asked foolishly. He stared at me: "We have served from father to son since the reign of Charles II." So the boy entered the *Britannia*, and I heard no more of

him until one morning, years after, I saw in an Honours List a name which I knew, that of a young Lieutenant who had won the rare naval V.C. in the Mediterranean. It was my friend's son; blood had triumphed; the delicate, shy, almost timid lad had made good.

The Navy catches its men when they are young, unspoiled, malleable, and moulds them with deft fingers as a sculptor works his clay. Officers enter in their early teens—now as boys at Osborne who afterwards become naval cadets at Dartmouth. Formerly they spent a year or two longer at school and entered direct as cadets to the *Brittania*. The system is essentially the same now as it has been for generations. The material must be good and young, the best of it is retained and the less good rejected. The best is moulded and stamped in the Dartmouth workshop, and emerges after the bright years of early boyhood with the naval hall mark upon it. The seamen enter as boys into training-ships, and they, too, are moulded and stamped into the naval pattern. It is a very exacting but a very just education. No one who has been admitted to the privilege of training need be rejected except by his own fault, and if he is not worthy to be continued in training, he is emphatically not worthy to serve in the Fleets.

Of late years this system, which requires abundance of time for its full working out, has proved to be deficient in elasticity. It takes some seven years to make a cadet into a sub-lieutenant, while a great battleship can be built and equipped in little more than two years. The German North Sea menace caused a rapid expansion in the out-

put of ships, especially of big ships, which far outstripped the training of junior officers needed for their service. The Osborne-Dartmouth system had not failed, far from it, but it was too slow for the requirements of the Navy under the new conditions. In order to keep up with the demand, the supply of naval cadets was increased and speeded up by the admission of young men from the public schools at the age when they had been accustomed to enter for permanent Army commissions. A large addition was also made to the roll of subalterns of Marines—who received training both for sea and land work—and in this way the ranks of the junior officers afloat were rapidly expanded. There was no departure from the Navy's traditional policy of catching boys young and moulding them specially and exclusively for the Sea Service; the new methods were avowedly additional and temporary, to be modified or withdrawn when the need for urgent expansion had disappeared. The Navy was clearly right. It was obliged to make a change in its system, but it made it to as small an extent as would meet the conditions of the moment. The second best was tacked on to the first best, but the first best was retained in being to be reverted to exclusively as soon as might be. To catch boys young, preferably those with the sea tradition in their blood, to teach them during their most impressionable years that the Navy must always be to them as their father, mother and wedded wife—the exacting mistress which demands of them the whole of their affections, energies and service, to dedicate them in tender years to their Sea Goddess—this must always be the way to preserve, in its purest

undimmed water, that pearl of great price, the Soul of the Navy.

It follows from the circumstances of their training and life that the Navy is a Family of which the members are bound together by the closest of ties of individual friendship and association. It is a Service in which everybody knows everybody else, not only by name and reputation but by personal contact. During the long years of residence at Osborne and Dartmouth, and afterwards in the Fleets, at the Greenwich Naval College, at the Portsmouth schools of instruction, officers widely separated by years and rank learn to know one another and to weigh one another in the most just of balances—that of actual service. Those of us who have passed many years in the world of affairs, know that the only reputation worth having is that which we earn among those of our own profession or craft. And none of us upon land are known and weighed with the intimate certainty and impartiality which is possible to the Sea Service. We are not seen at close contact and under all conditions of work and play, and never in the white light which an ever-present peril casts upon our worth and hardihood. No fictitious reputation is possible in the Navy itself as it is possible in the world outside. Officers may, through the exercise of influence, be placed in positions over the heads of others of greater worth, they may be written and talked about by civilians in the newspapers as among the most brilliant in their profession—especially in time of peace—but the Navy, which has known them from youth to age inside and out, is not deceived. The Navy laughs at many of the reputations

which we poor civilians ignorantly honour. No naval reputation is of any value whatever unless it be endorsed by the Navy itself. And the Navy does not talk. How many newspaper readers, for instance, had heard of Admiral Jellicoe before he was placed in command of the Grand Fleet at the outbreak of war? But the Navy knew all about him and endorsed the choice.

What I write of officers applies with equal force to the men, to the long-service ratings, the petty officers and warrant officers who form the backbone of the Service. They, too, are caught young, drawn wherever possible from sea families, moulded and trained into the naval pattern, stamped after many years with the hall mark of the Service. It is a system which has bred a mutual confidence and respect between officers and men as unyielding as armour-plate. Before the battle of May 31st, 1916, the Grand Fleet had gone forth looking for Fritz many times and finding him not. Little was expected, but if the unexpected did happen, then officers believed in their long-service ratings as profoundly as did these dear old grumblers in their leaders. Many times in the wardrooms of the battle squadrons the prospects of action would be discussed and always in the same way.

"No, it's not likely to be anything, but if it is what we've been waiting for, I have every confidence in our long-service ratings if the Huns are really out for blood. You know what I mean —those grizzled old G.L.I.s (gunlayers, first-class), and gunners' mates and horny-handed old A.B.s whom we curse all day for their damned obstinacy. The Huns think that two years make a gunlayer; we know that even twelve years are

14826

not enough. Our long-service ratings would pull the country through, even if we hadn't the mechanical advantage over Fritz which we actually possess. And the combination of the long-service ratings and the two-Power standard will, when we get to work upon him, give Fritz furiously to think."

Even when the great expansion among the big fighting ships called for a corresponding expansion in the crews, little essential change was made in the system which had bred confidence such as this. There was some slight dilution. Officers and men of the R.N.R. and the Naval Volunteers, to the extent of about 10 per cent., were drafted into the first-line battleships, but the cream of the professional service was kept for the first fighting line. For the most part the new temporary Navy, of admirable material drawn from our almost limitless maritime population, was kept at work in the Fringes of the Fleet—the minesweepers, armed liners, blockading patrols, and so on—where less technical navy skill was required, and where invaluable service could be and was done. The professional Navy has the deepest respect and gratitude for the devoted work discharged by its amateur auxiliaries.

The Navy is a young man's service. In no other career in life are the vital energies, the eager spirits, the glowing capacities of youth given such ample opportunities for expression. A naval officer can become a proud "Owner," with an independent command of a destroyer or submarine, at an age when in a civil profession he would be entrusted with scanty responsibilities. In civil life there is a horrible waste of youth; it

is kept down, largely left unused, by the jealousy of age. But the Navy, which is very wise, makes the most of every hour of it. The small craft, the Fringes of the Fleet as Mr. Kipling calls them, the eyes and ears and guardians of the big ships, the patrol boats, submarines and destroyers, are captained by youngsters under thirty, often under twenty-five. The land crushes youth, the sea allows and encourages its fine flower to expand. Naval warfare is directed by grave men, but is to an enormous extent carried on by bright boys.

But the Navy which employs youth more fully than any other service, also uses it up more remorselessly. Unless an officer can reach the rank of Commander—a rank above that of a Major in the Army—when he is little more than thirty he has a very scanty chance in time of peace of ever serving afloat as a full Captain. The small ships are many in number, but the big ships are comparatively few. Only the best of the best can become Commanders at an age which enables them to reach post rank in that early manhood which is a necessity for the command of a modern super-Dreadnought. Many of those who do become Captains in the early forties have to eat out their hearts upon half-pay because there are not enough big ships in commission to go round. It is only in time of war that the whole of our Fleets are mobilised. Some years ago I was dining with several naval officers from a battle squadron which lay in the Firth of Forth. Beside me sat a young man looking no more than thirty-five, and actually little older. He was a Captain I knew, and in course of conversation I asked for the name of his ship. "The *Dread-*

STUDENTS LIBRARY
CONCORDIA TEACHERS COLLEGE
RIVER FOREST, ILLINOIS

nought," said he. This was the time when the name and fame of the first *Dreadnought,* the first all-big-gun ship which revolutionised the construction of the battle line, was ringing through the world. And yet here was this famous ship in charge of a young smooth-faced fellow, younger than myself, and I did not then consider that I was middle-aged! "Are you not rather young?" I enquired diffidently. He smiled, "We need to be young," said he. Then I understood. It came home to me that the modern Navy, with its incredibly rapid development in machinery, must have in its executive officers those precious qualities of adaptability and quick perception, that readiness to be always learning and testing, seeking and finding the best new ways of solving old problems, which can only be found in youth. Youth is of the essence of the Navy, it always has been so and it probably always will be. Youth learns quickly, and the Naval officer is always learning. In civil life we enter our professions, we struggle through our examinations as doctors or lawyers or engineers, and then we are content to pass our lives in practice and forget our books. But the naval officer, whose active life is passed on the salt sea, is ever a student. He goes backwards and forwards between the sea and the schools. There is no stage and no rank at which his education stops. Gunnery, torpedo practice, electricity, navigation, naval strategy, and tactics are all rapidly progressive sciences. A few years, a very few years, and a whole scheme of practice becomes obsolete. So the naval officer needs for ever to be passing from the sea to the *Vernon,* or the *Excellent,* or to Greenwich, where he is kept

up-to-date and given a perennial opportunity to develop the best that is in him. From fifteen to forty he is always learning, always testing, always growing, and then—unless his luck is very great—he has to give way to the rising youth of other men and rest himself unused upon the shelf. The highest posts are not for him. It is very remorseless the way in which the Navy uses and uses up its youth, and very touching the devoted humble way in which that youth submits to be so used up. The Navy is ever growing in science and in knowledge, it must always have of the best—the remorselessness with which it chooses only of the best, and the patience with which those who are not of the best submit without repining to its devices, are of the Soul of the Navy.

Admiral Sir David Beatty became Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Fleet at the age of forty-five. In years of life and of service he was junior to half the Captains' List. He had sprung by merit and by opportunity some ten years above his contemporaries at Dartmouth. First in the Soudan, when serving in the flotilla of gunboats, he won promotion from Lieutenant to Commander at the age of twenty-seven. Again at Tien-tsin in China, his chance came, and in 1900, while still under thirty, he reached the captain's rank. When the war broke out he was a Rear-Admiral in command of the First Battle Cruiser Squadron, and was given the acting rank of Vice-Admiral. He is now an acting Admiral, and his seniors in years, and even in rank, willingly serve beneath him. Admiral Beatty is not a scientific sailor, and is not wedded to the Service as are most of his brother officers. But for the outbreak of the war he

would probably have retired. Yet no one questions his pre-eminent fitness for his dazzling promotion. He has that rare indefinable quality of leadership of men and of war instinct which cannot be revealed except by war itself. When, by fortunate chance, this quality is discovered in an officer it is instantly recognised as beyond price, and cherished at its full worth.

The Naval system which teaches subordination, also teaches independence. If to men roaming over the seas in command of ships, orders come, it is well; if orders do not come it is also well—they get on very well without them. If the entire Admiralty were wiped out by German bombs, My Lords and the whole staff destroyed, the Navy would, in its own language, "proceed" to carry on. In the middle of the political crisis of December 1916, when a new Naval Board of Admiralty had just been appointed, I asked a senior officer how the new lot were getting on. He said: "There isn't any First Lord. The First Sea Lord is in bed with influenza. The Second Sea Lord is in bed with influenza. The Third Sea Lord is in bed with influenza. The Fourth Sea Lord is at work but is sickening for influenza. *But the Navy is all right.*" That is the note of serene confidence which distinguishes the Sea Service. Whatever happens, the Navy is all right.

The Navy is a poor man's Service. It is a real profession in which the officers as a rule live on their pay and ask for little more. Men of great houses will enter the Army in time of peace and regard it as a mild occupation, men of money will enter for the social position which it may give to them. But no man of rank or of money in search

of a "cushy job," was ever such an ass as to look for it in the Navy. Few officers in the Navy —except among those who have entered in quite recent years—have any resources beyond their pay; many of them are born to it, and in their families there have been scanty opportunities for saving. The Admiralty, until quite recently, required that young officers upon entry into the Navy or the Marines should be allowed small specified sums until they attained in service pay the eminence of about 11s. a day, and also that a complete uniform equipment should be provided for them; but after that initial help from home they were expected to make their pay suffice. And in the great majority of cases they did what was expected of them. Living is cheap in the Sea Service. Ships pay no duties upon their stores, and there are few opportunities afloat for the wasting of money. Mess bills in ward-room and gun-room are small, and must be kept small, or the captain will arise in wrath and ask to be informed (in writing) of the reason why. Ere now young men have been dismissed their ships for persistently running up too large a wine bill; and to be dismissed one's ship means not only a bad mark in the Admiralty's books, but loss of seniority, which in turn means an extra early retirement upon that exiguous half-pay which looms always like a dark cloud upon the naval horizon.

Unhappily for its officers and the country the Navy has not been a married man's service; it has been too exacting to tolerate a divided allegiance. Sometimes poor young things under stress of emotion have got married, and then has begun for them the most cruel and ageing of struggles—

the man at sea hard put to it to keep up his position, simple though it be; the wife ashore in poor lodgings or in some tiny villa, lonely, struggling, growing old too fast for her years; children who rarely see their father, and whose prospects are of the gloomiest. I do not willingly put my pen to this picture. Young Navy men, glowing with health and virile energy, and the spirit of the Service, are very attractive creatures to whom goes out the love of women, but though they, too, may love, they are usually compelled to sail away. It is well for them then if they are as firmly wedded to the Service as the Roman priest is to his Church, and if they are not always as continent as the priest, who is so free from sin that he will dare to cast a stone at them? If the country and its rulers had any belief in heredity, of which the evidence stares at them from the eyes of every naval son born to the Service, they would grant to a young officer a year of leave in which to be married, and pay to him and to his mate a handsome subsidy for every splendid son whom they laid in the cradles of the Service of the future.

Of late years there has been a change. The rapid expansion of the Fleets has brought in many young cadets of commercial families, whose parents have far more money than is wholly good for their sons. The Navy is not so completely a poor man's service as it was even ten years ago. The junior officers are, some of them, too well off. Not long since, a senior Captain was lamenting this change in my presence. "The snotties now," he groaned, "all keep motor bicylces, the sub-lieutenants are not happy till they own cars, and the Lieutenant-Commanders think nothing of getting married.

All this has been the result of concentrating the Fleets in home waters. Germany compelled us to do it, but the Service was the better for the three-year commissions on foreign stations." All this is true. The junior ranks are getting richer. At sea they can spend little, but ashore and in harbour there are opportunities for gold to corrupt the higher virtues. For my part, however, I have the fullest confidence in the training and the example of the older officers. In this war there has been nothing to suggest that the young Navy is less devoted and self-sacrificing than the old. The wealthier boys may take their fling on leave—and who can blame them?—but at sea the Service comes first.

We love that most which is most hardly won. And the Navy men love their Service, not because it is easy but because of the hardness of it, and because of the sacrifices which it exacts from them. It fastens its grip upon them in those first years between fifteen and twenty, and the grip grows ever tighter with the flight of time. It is at its very tightest when the dreadful hour of retirement arrives. When War broke out, in August 1914, it was hailed with joy by the active Navy afloat, but their joy was as water unto wine in comparison with that which transfigured the retired Navy ashore. For them at long last the impossible had crystallised into fact. For those who were still young enough, the uniforms were waiting ready in the tin boxes upstairs, and it was but a short step from their house doors to the decks of a King's ship. Once more their gallant names could be written in the Active List of their Navy. They hastened back, these eager ones, and if

there was no employment for them in their own rank, they snatched at that in any other rank which offered. Captains R.N. became commanders and even lieutenants R.N.R. in the Fringes. Admirals became temporary captains. There were indeed at one time no fewer than nineteen retired admirals serving as temporary officers R.N.R. in armed liners.

If you would understand how the Navy loves the Service, how that love is not a part of their lives, but is their lives, reflect upon the case of one aged officer. I will not give his name; he would not wish it. He had been in retirement for nearly forty years, too old for service in his rank, too old possibly for service in any rank. But his pleadings for employment afloat softened the understanding hearts at Whitehall. He was allowed to rejoin and to serve as a temporary Lieutenant-Commander in an armed yacht which assisted the ex-Brazilian monitors sent to bombard the Belgian coast. There against Zeebrugge he served among kindly lads young enough to be his grandsons, and there with them and among them he was killed—the oldest officer serving afloat. And he was happy in his death. Not Wolfe before Quebec, not Nelson in the cockpit of the *Victory*, were happier or more glorious in their deaths than was that temporary Lieutenant-Commander (transferred at his own request from the retired list) who fought his last fight upon the decks of an armed yacht and died as he would have prayed to die.

The Navy hates advertisement and scorns above all things in heaven or upon earth the indiscriminating praise of well-meaning civilians. I sadly

realise that it may scorn me and this book of mine. But I will do my best to make amends. I will promise that never once in describing their deeds will I refer to Navy men as "heroes." I will not, where I can possibly avoid doing so, mention the name of anyone. I will do my utmost at all times to write of them as men and not as "b——— angels." I will, at the peril of some inconsistency, declare my conviction that naval officers haven't any souls, that they are in the Service because they love it, and not because they care two pins for their country, that they are rather pleased than otherwise when rotten civilians at home get a bad fright from a raid. I will declare that they catch and sink German submarines by all manner of cunning devices, from the sheer zest of sport, and not because they would raise a finger to save the lives of silly passengers in luxurious ocean liners. I will do anything to turn their scorn away from me except to withdraw one word which I have written upon the Soul of the Navy. For upon this subject they would, I believe, write as I do if the gods had given to them leisure for philosophical analysis—which they are much too busy to bother about—and the knack of verbally expressing their thoughts. When I read a naval despatch I always groan over it as an awful throwing away of the most splendid opportunities. I always long to have been in the place of the writer, to have seen what he saw, to know what he knew, and to tell the world in living phrase what tremendous deeds were really done. Naval despatches are the baldest of documents, cold, formal, technical, most forbiddingly uninspiring. Whenever I ask naval

officers why they do not put into despatches the vivid details which sometimes find their way into private letters they glare at me, and even their beautiful courtesy can scarcely keep back the sniff of contempt. "Despatches," say they, "are written for the information of the Admiralty." That is a complete answer under the Naval Code. The despatches, which make one groan, are written for the information of the Admiralty, not to thrill poor creatures such as you and me. A naval officer cares only for his record at the Admiralty and for his reputation among those of his own craft. If a newspaper calls Lieutenant A— B— a hero, and writes enthusiastically of his valour, he shudders as would a modest woman if publicly praised for her chastity. Valour goes with the Service, it is a part of the Soul of the Navy. It is taken for granted and is not to be talked or written about. And so with those other qualities that spring from the traditions of the Navy—the chivalry which risks British lives to save those of drowning enemies, the tenderness which binds up their wounds, the honours paid to their dead. All these things, which the Royal Navy never forgets and the German Navy for the most part has never learned, are taken for granted and are not to be talked of or written about.

. . . . .

It is inevitable from the nature of its training that the Navy should be intensely self-centred. If one catches a boy when he has but recently emerged from the nursery, teaches him throughout his active life that there is but one work fit for the service of man, dedicates him to it by the

strictest discipline, cuts him off by the nature of his daily life from all intimate contact with or understanding of the world which moves upon land, his imagination will be atrophied by disuse. He will become absorbed into the Naval life which is a life entirely of its own, apart and distinct from all other lives. There is a deep gulf set between the Naval life and all other lives which very few indeed of the Navy ever seek to cross. Their attitude towards civilians is very like that of the law-making statesman of old who said: "The people have nothing to do with the laws except to obey them." If the Navy troubled to think of civilians at all—it never does unless they annoy it with their futile chatter in Parliament and elsewhere—it would say: "Civilians have nothing to do with the Navy except to pay for it." Keen as is the imaginative foresight of the Navy in regard to everything which concerns its own honour and effectiveness, it is utterly lacking in any sympathetic imaginative understanding of the intense civilian interest in itself and in its work. We poor creatures who stand outside, I who write and you who read, do in actual fact love the Navy only a little less devotedly than the Navy loves its own Service. We long to understand it, to help it, and to pay for it. We know what we owe to it, but we would ask, in all proper humility, that now and then the Navy would realise and appreciate the certain fact that it owes some little of its power and success to us.

I cannot in a formula define the collective Soul of the Navy. It is a moral atmosphere which cannot be chemically resolved. It is a subtle and elusive compound of tradition, self sacrifice, early training,

willing discipline, youth, simplicity, valour, chivalry, lack of imagination, and love of the Service—and the greatest of these is Love. I have tried to indicate what it is, how it has given to this wonderful Navy of ours a terrible unity, a terrible force, and an even more terrible intelligence; how it has transformed a body of men into a gigantic spiritual Power which expresses its might in the forms and means of naval warfare. I cannot exactly define it, but I can in a humble faltering way do my best to reveal it in its working.

CHAPTER II

THE COMING OF WAR

Our Navy has played the great game of war by sea for too many hundreds of years ever to underrate its foes. It is even more true of the sea than of the land that the one thing sure to happen is that which is unexpected. Until they have measured by their own high standards the quality of an enemy, our officers and men rate him in valour, in sea skill, and in masterful ingenuity as fully the equal of themselves. Until August 1914 the Royal Navy had never fought the German, and had no standards of experience by which to assay him. The Navy had known the maritime nations of Europe and fought them many times, but the Germans, a nation of landsmen artificially converted into sailors within a single generation, were a problem both novel and baffling. Eighteen years before the War, Germany had no navy worth speaking of in comparison with ours; during those fateful years she built ships and guns, trained officers and men, and secured her sea bases on the North Sea and in the Baltic at a speed and with a concentrated enthusiasm which were wholly wonderful and admirable. "The Future of Germany lies on the water," cried the Kaiser one day, and his faithful people took up the cry. "We

here and now challenge Britain upon her chosen element." Quite seriously and soberly the German Navy Law of 1900 issued this challenge, and the Fatherland settled down to its prodigious task with a serene confidence and an extraordinary energy which won for it the ungrudging respect of its future foes.

Perhaps the Royal Navy in those early years of the twentieth century, and especially in 1913 and 1914, became just a little bit infected by the mental disease of exalting everything German, which had grown into an obsession among many Englishmen. At home during the War men oppressed by their enemy's land power, would talk as if one German cut in two became two Germans. German organisation, German educational training, German mechanical and scientific skill are very good, but they are not superhuman. Their failures, like those of other folk, are fully as numerous as their successes. In trade they won many triumphs over us because British trading methods were individualistic and were totally lacking in national direction and support. But the Royal Navy is in every respect wholly distinct from every other British institution. It is the one and only National Service which has always declined to recognise in its practice the British policy of muddling through. It is the one Service with a mind and an iron Soul of its very own. So that when Germany set to work to create out of nothing a navy to compete with our own, she was up against a vast spiritual power which she did not understand, the Soul of the Navy, that unifying dominating force which gives to it an incomparable strength. She was up, too,

against that experience of the sea and of sea warfare in a race of islanders which had been living and growing since the days of King Alfred. The wonderful thing is this: not that the German Navy has at no point been able to bear comparison with ours—in design of ships, in quality and weight of guns, in sea cunning, in sea training and in hardihood—but that in the few short years of the present century the German Navy should have been built at all, manned at all, trained at all.

As the German Navy grew, and our ships came in contact with those of the Germans, especially upon foreign stations, our naval officers and men came to regard their future foes with much respect and even with admiration. We knew how great a task the Germans had set to themselves, and were astonished at the speed with which they made themselves efficient. I have often been told that during the years immediately before the war, the relations between English and German naval officers and men were more close than those between English officers and men and the sailors of any other navy. It became recognised that in the Germans we should have foemen of undoubted gallantry and of no less undoubted skill. There are few officers and men in our Fleets who do not know personally and admire their opposite numbers upon the enemy's side, and though our foes have in many ways broken the rules of war as understood and practised by us, one never hears the Royal Navy call the Germans "pirates." Expressions such as this one are left to civilians. When Mr. Churchill announced that the officers and crews of captured U boats would be treated differently from those taken in surface ships, the

Navy strongly disapproved. To them it seemed that the responsibility for breaches of international law and practice lay not with naval officers and men, whose duty it was to carry out the orders of the superiors, but that it lay with the superiors who gave those orders. To retaliate upon subordinate officers and men for the crimes of their political chiefs seemed cowardly, and worse—it struck a blow at the whole fabric of naval discipline not only in the German but in every other Service, including our own. Our officers saw more clearly than did the then First Lord that no Naval Service can remain efficient for a day if it be encouraged to discriminate between the several orders conveyed to it, and to claim for itself a moral right to select what shall be obeyed and what disobeyed.

Germany had no maritime traditions and a scanty seafaring population to assist her. Her seaboard upon the North Sea is a maze of shallows and sandbanks, through which devious channels leading to her naval and commercial bases are kept open only by continuous dredging. God has made Plymouth Sound, Spithead and the Firth of Forth; the Devil, it is alleged, has been responsible for Scapa and the Pentland Firth in winter; but man, German man, has made the navigable mouths of the Elbe, the Weser and the Ems. The Baltic is an inland sea upon which the coasting trade had for centuries been mainly in the hands of Scandinavians. Until late in the nineteenth century Germany was one of the least maritime of all nations; almost at a leap she sprang into the position of one of the greatest. It is said that peoples get the governments which they deserve;

it is certainly true that when peoples are blind their governments shut their eyes. In the Country of the Blind the one-eyed man is not King; he is flung out for having the impertinence to pretend to see. In a state of blindness or of careless indifference we made Germany a present of Heligoland in 1890. It looked a poor thing, a crumbling bit of waste rock, and when the Kaiser asked for it he received the gift almost without discussion. Both our Government and Court at that time were almost rabidly pro-German. We all cherished so much suspicion of France and Russia that we had none left to spare for Germany. Heligoland was then of no great use to us, but it was of incalculable value to our future enemies. A German Heligoland fortified, equipped with airship sheds and long-distance wireless, a shelter for submarines, was to the new German Navy only second in value to the Kiel Canal. Islands do not "command" anything beyond range of their guns, especially when they have no harbours; but Heligoland, though it in no sense commanded the approach to the German bases, was an invaluable outpost and observation station. It is a little island of crumbling red rock, preserved only by man's labour from vanishing into the sea; it is a mile long and less than one-third of a mile wide; it is 28 miles from the nearest mainland. Yet when we gave to Germany this scrap of wasting rock, we gave her the equivalent in naval value of a fleet. We secured her North Sea bases from our sudden attacks, and we gave her an observation station from which she could direct attacks against ourselves.

Heligoland, a free gift from us, was the first

asset, a most valuable asset, which Germany was able to place to the credit side of her naval balance sheet. Other assets were rapidly acquired. In 1898 the building of the new navy seriously began, in 1900 was passed the famous German Navy Law setting forth a continuous programme of expansion, the back alley between the North Sea and the Baltic was cut through the isthmus of Schleswig-Holstein, and Germany as a Sea Power rose into being. The British people, at first amused and slightly contemptuous, became alarmed, and the Royal Navy, always watchful, never boastful, never undervaluing any possible opponent, settled down to deal in its own supremely efficient fashion with the German Menace.

Neither the British people nor the Royal Navy were lacking in confidence in themselves, but neither the people nor the Navy—we are, perhaps, the least analytical race on earth—realised the immovable foundation upon which their coı dence was based. The people were wise; they simply trusted to the Navy and gave to it whatever it asked. But the Navy, though fully alive to the value of its own traditions, training, and centuries-old skill, did not fully understand that the source of its own immense striking force was moral rather than material. Like its critics it thought over much in machines, and when it saw across the North Sea the outpouring of ships and guns and men which Germany called her Navy, it became not a little anxious about the result of a sudden unforeseen collision. It was, if anything, over anxious.

But while this is true of the Navy as a whole, it is not true of the higher naval command. Away

hidden in Whitehall, immersed in the study of problems for which the data were known and from which no secrets were hid, sat those who had taken the measure of the German efforts and gauged the value of them more justly than could the Germans themselves. They, the silent ones, —who never talked to representatives of the Press or inspired articles in the newspapers—knew that the German ships, especially the all-big-gun ships, generically but rather misleadingly called "Dreadnoughts," were in nearly every class inferior copies of our own ships of two or three years earlier. The Royal Navy designed and built the first Dreadnought at Portsmouth in fifteen months, and preserved so rigid a secrecy about her details that she was a "mystery ship" till actually in commission. This lead of fifteen months, so skilfully and silently acquired, became in practice three years, for it reduced to waste paper all the German designs. The first Dreadnought was commissioned by us on December 11th, 1906; it was not until May 3rd, 1910, that the Germans put into service the first *Nassaus*, which were inferior copies. Our lead gained in 1906 was more than maintained, and each batch of German designs showed that step by step they had to wait upon us to reveal to them the path of naval progress. With us the upward rush was extraordinarily rapid; with the Germans it was slow and halting—they were slow to grasp what we were about and were then slow to interpret in steel those of our intentions which they were able to discern. Once our Navy had adopted the revolutionary idea of the all-big-gun ship—the design was perhaps an evolution rather than a

14846

revolution—its constructors and designers developed the principle with the most astonishing rapidity. The original *Dreadnought* was out of date in the designers' minds within a year of her completion. After two or three years she was what the Americans call "a back number," and when the War broke out we had in hand—some of them nearly completed—the great class of *Queen Elizabeths* with 25 knots of speed and eight 15-inch guns, vessels as superior to the first *Dreadnought* in fighting force as she was herself superior to the light German battleships which her appearance cast upon the scrap heap. And Germany, in spite of her patient efforts, her system of espionage —which rarely seemed to discover anything of real importance—and her outpouring of gold, had even then as her best battleships vessels little better than our first *Dreadnought.* It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the five *Queen Elizabeths* and the five *Royal Sovereigns* which we put into commission during the war, equipped with eighty 15-inch guns, could have taken on with ease the whole of the German battle fleet as it existed in August 1914. Up to the outbreak of war, at each stage in the race for weight of guns, power and speed, Britain remained fully two years ahead of Germany in quality and a great deal more than two years ahead in magnitude of output. During the war, as I will show later on, the British lead was prodigiously increased and accelerated.

In its inmost heart, and especially in the heart of the higher command, the Royal Navy knew that German designers of big ships were but pale copyists of their own, and that the shipyards of

Danzig and Stettin and Hamburg could not compete in speed or in quantity with its own yards and those of its contractors in England and Scotland. And yet knowing these things, there was an undercurrent of anxiety ever present both in the Navy and in those circles within its sphere of influence. It seemed to some anxious minds—especially of civilian naval students—that what was known could not be the whole truth, and that the Germans—belief in whose ingenuity and resources had become an obsession with many people—must have some wonderful unknown ships and still more wonderful guns hidden in the deep recesses behind the Frisian sandbanks. In those days, a year or two before August 1914, men who ought to have known better would talk gravely of secret shipyards where stupendous vessels were under construction, and of secret gunshops where the superhuman Krupps were at work upon designs which would change the destinies of nations. Anyone who has ever seen a battleship upon a building slip, and knows how few are the slips which can accommodate them and how few are the builders competent to make them, and how few can build the great guns and gun mountings, will smile at the idea of secret yards and secret construction. Details may be kept secret, as with the first *Dreadnought* and with many of our super-battleships, but the main dimensions and purpose of a design are glaringly conspicuous to the eyes of the Royal Navy's Intelligence Service. One might as well try to hide a Zeppelin as a battleship.

As with ships so with guns. I will deal in another chapter with the Navy's belief, fully

justified in action, in the bigger gun—the straight shooting, hard hitting naval gun of ever-expanding calibre—and in the higher speed of ships which enables the bigger gun to be used at its most effective range. There was nothing new in this belief; it was the ripe fruit of all naval experience. Speed without hitting power is of little use in the battle line; hitting power without speed gives to an enemy the advantage of manœuvre and of escape; but speed and hitting power, both greater than those of an enemy, spell certain annihilation for him. He can neither fight nor run away. Given sufficient light and sea room for a fight to the finish, he must be destroyed. The North Sea deadlock is due to lack of room.

Our guns developed in size and in power as rapidly as did our great ships in the capacity to carry and use them. Krupps have a very famous name, made famous beyond their merits by the extravagant adulation which for years past has been poured upon them in our own country by our own people. The Germans are a race of egotists, but they have never exalted themselves, and everything that is German, to the utterly absurd heights to which many fearful Englishmen have exalted them in England. Krupps have been bowed down to and almost worshipped as the Gods of Terror. Their supreme capacity for inventing and constructing the best possible guns has been taken as proved beyond the need of demonstration. But Krupps were not and are not supermen; they have had to learn their trade like more humble folk, and naval gun-making is not a trade which can be taken up one day and made perfect on the next. Krupps are good gun-

makers, but our own naval gunshops have for years outclassed them at every point—in design, in size, in power, in quality, and in speed of production. The long wire-wound naval gun, a miracle of patient workmanship, is British not German. While Krupps were labouring to make 11-inch guns which would shoot straight and not "droop" at the muzzle, our Navy was designing and making 12-inch and 13.5-inch weapons of far greater power and accuracy; when Krupps had at last achieved good 12-inch guns, we were turning out rapidly 15-inch weapons of equal precision and far greater power. In naval guns Krupps lag far behind us. And even in land guns—well, the huge seige howitzers which battered Liège and Namur into powder, came not from Essen but from the Austrian Skoda Works at Pilsen! And among field guns, the best of the best by universal acclaim is the French *Soizante Quinze*, in design and workmanship entirely the product of French artistic skill. War is a sad leveller, and it has not been very kind to Krupps.

Collectively, the Navy is a fount of serene knowledge and wisdom, and has been fully conscious of its superiority in men, in ships, and in guns, but individual naval officers afloat or ashore are not always either learned or wise. Foolish things were thought and said in 1913 and in 1914, which one can now recall with a smile and charitably endeavour to forget.

The Royal Navy was, and is, as superior to that of Germany in officers and men as in ships and in guns. Indeed the one is the direct and inevitable consequence of the other. Ships and guns are not imposed upon the Navy by some

outside intelligence; they are secretions from the brains and experience and traditions of the Service itself; they are the expressions in machinery of its Soul. One always comes back to this fundamental fact when making any comparison of relative values in men or in machines. It was the Navy's Soul which conceived and made ready the ships and the guns. The officers and men are the temporary embodiment of that immortal Soul; it is preserved and developed in them, and through them is passed on to succeeding generations in the Service.

Though the German Navy had not had time or opportunity to evolve within itself that dominant moral force which I have called a naval Soul, it contained both officers and men of notable fighting quality and efficiency. The Royal Navy no more under-rated the personality of its German opponents than it under-rated their ships and their guns. We English, though in foreign eyes we may appear to be self-satisfied, even bumptious, are at heart rather diffident. No nation on earth publicly depreciates itself as we do; no nation is so willing to proclaim its own weaknesses and follies and crimes. Much of this self-depreciation is mere humbug, little more sincere than our confession on Sunday that we are "miserable sinners," but much of it is the result of our native diffidence. No Scotsman was ever mistrustful of himself or of his race, but very many Englishmen quite genuinely are. And the Navy being, as it always has been, English of the English, tends to be modest, even diffident. It is always learning, always testing itself, always seeking after improvement; it realises out of the fullness of its ex-

perience how much still remains to be learned, and becomes inevitably diffident of its very great knowledge and skill. No man is so modest as the genuine unchallengeable expert.

If one cannot improvise ships and guns of the highest quality by an exercise of the Imperial will, still less can one improvise the officers and men who have to man and use them. But Germany tried to do both. The German Navy could not secrete its ships and guns, for there was no considerable German navy a score of years ago; the machines were designed and provided for it by Vulcan and Schichau and Krupps, and the personnel to fight them had to be collected and trained from out of the best available material. The officers were largely drawn from Prussian families which for generations had served in the Army, and had in their blood that sense of discipline and warlike fervour which are invaluable in the leaders of any fighting force. But they had in them also the ruthless temper of the German Army, which we have seen revealed in its frightful worst in Belgium, Serbia and Poland; they knew nothing of that kindly chivalrous spirit which is born out of the wide salt womb of the Sea Mother. Many of these officers, though lacking in the Sea Spirit, were highly competent at their work. Von Spee's Pacific Squadron, which beat Craddock off Coronel and was a little later annihilated by Sturdee off the Falkland Islands, was, officer for officer and man for man, almost as good as our best. The German Pacific Squadron was nearer the realisation of the naval Soul than was any other part of the German Navy. Admiral Von Spee was a gallant and chivalrous gentleman, and the captain

of the *Emden*, ingenious, gay, humorous, unspoiled in success and undaunted in defeat, was as English in spirit as he was unlike most of his compatriots in sentiment. The Navy and the public at home were right when they acclaimed Von Spee and von Müller as seamen worthy to rank with their own Service.

The German Pacific Squadron, being on foreign service, had not only picked officers of outstanding merit, but also long-service crews of unpressed men. It was, therefore, in organisation and personnel much more akin to our Navy than was the High Seas Fleet at home in which the men were for the most part conscripts on short service (three years) from the Baltic, Elbe and inland provinces. In our Service the sailors and marines join for twenty-one years, and in actual practice frequently serve very much longer. They begin as children in training-ships and in the schools attached to Marine barracks, and often continue in middle life as grave men in the petty and warrant officer ranks. The Naval Service is the work of their lives just as it is with the commissioned officers. But in the German High Seas Fleet, with its three years of forced service, a man was no sooner half-trained than his time was up and he gladly made way for a raw recruit. The German crews were not of the Sea nor of the Service. During the war, no doubt, they became better trained. The experienced seamen were not discharged and the general level of skill arose; the best were passed into the submarines which alone of the Fleet were continuously at work on the sea. In our own Navy, in consequence of the very great increase in the number of ships,

both large and small, the professional sailors had to be diluted by the calling up of Naval Reservists, and by the expansion of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. But unlike Germany we had, fortunately for ourselves, an almost limitless maritime population from which to draw the new naval elements. Fishermen at the call of their country flocked into the perilous service of mine sweeping and patrolling, young men from the seaports readily joined the Volunteer detachments in training for the great ships, dilution was carried on deftly and with so clear a judgment that the general level of efficiency all round was almost completely maintained. That this was possible is not so remarkable as it sounds. The Royal Navy of the fighting ships, even after the war expansion, remained a very small select service of carefully chosen men. Half of its personnel was professional and perfectly trained, the second and new half was so mingled and stirred up with the first that the professional leaven permeated the whole mass. The Army which desired millions had to take what it could get; but the Navy, which counts its men in tens of thousands only, could pick and choose of the best. In the Army the old Regulars were either killed or swamped under the flood of new entrants; in the Navy the professionals remained always predominant. It was very characteristic of the proud exclusiveness of our Royal Navy, very characteristic of its haughty Soul, that the temporary officers were allotted rank marks which distinguished them at a glance, even of civilian eyes, from the regular Service.

Though, as events proved, the Royal Navy need have felt little anxiety about the result of a fair

trial of strength with its German opponents, there was one ever-present justification for that deeper apprehension with which the Navy in peace regarded an outbreak of war. It really was feared lest our Government should leave to the Germans the moment for beginning hostilities. It was feared lest while politicians were waiting and seeing the Germans would strike suddenly at their "selected moment," and by a well-planned torpedo and submarine attack in time of supposed peace, would put themselves in a position of substantial advantage. There was undoubted ground for this fear. The German Government has not, and never has had, any scruples; it has no moral standards; if before a declaration of war it could have struck hard and successfully at our Fleets it would have seized the opportunity without hesitation. And realising this with the clarity of vision which distinguishes the Sea Service, the Navy feared lest its freedom of action should be fatally restricted at the very moment when its hands needed to be most free.

A distinguished naval captain—now an admiral —once put the matter before me plainly from the naval point of view:

"If the Germans secretly mobilise at a moment when a third of our big ships are out of commission or are under repair, they may not only by a sudden torpedo attack cripple our battle squadrons, but may open the seas to their own cruisers and submarines. We might, possibly should, recover in time to deal with an invasion, but in the meantime our overseas trade, on which you people depend at home for food and raw materials, would have been destroyed. And until

we had fully recovered, not a man or a gun could be sent over sea to help France."

"Surely we should have some warning," I objected.

"You won't get it from Germany," said he gravely. "The little old man (Roberts) is right. Germany will strike when Germany's hour has struck. If we are ready she will have no chance at all and knows it; she will not give us a chance to be ready. When she wants to cover a secret mobilisation she will invite parties of journalists, or provincial mayors, or village greengrocers to visit Berlin and to see for themselves how peaceful her intentions are!"

That is how the Navy felt and talked during the months immediately before the War, and who shall say that their apprehensions were not well founded? What it feared was unquestionably possible, even probable. But happily for the Navy, and for these Islands and the Empire which it guards, those whom the gods seek to destroy they first drive mad. The wisdom of Germany's rulers was by all of us immensely over-rated. They fell into the utter blindness of unimaginative stupidity. They understood us so little that they thought us sure to desert our friends rather than risk the paint upon our ships and the skins upon our fat and slothful bodies. They watched us quarrelling among ourselves, talking savagely of fighting one another in Ireland—we went on doing these things until July 28th, 1914, four days before Germany attacked Belgium!—and failed to realise that the ancient fighting spirit was as strong in us as ever, however much it might seem to be smothered under the rubbish of politics and

social luxury. And meanwhile, during those intensely critical weeks of July, while Parliament chattered about Ulster and politicians looked hungrily for the soft spots in one another's throats, the Royal Navy was quietly, unostentatiously preparing for war. What the Navy then did,—moving in all things with its own silent, serene, masterful efficiency and grimly thanking God for the dense political gas clouds behind which it could conceal its movements from the enemy,—saved not only Great Britain and the Empire; it saved the civilisation of the world.

Blindly Germany went on with her preparations for war against France and Russia, including in the programme the swallowing up of little Belgium, and left us wholly out of her calculations. The German battle Fleet, which had been engaged in peace manœuvres, was cruising off the Norwegian coast. Grand Admiral Von Tirpitz had never expected us to intervene, and no naval preparations were made. The Germans were in no position to interfere with our disposition, or to move their cruisers upon our trade communications. But all through those later days of imminent crisis the English First Fleet lay mobilised at Portland, whither it had moved from Spithead, until one night it slipped silently away and disappeared into the northern mists. The Second and Third Fleets had been filled up and were completely ready for war in the early summer dawn of August 3rd. The big ships rushed to their war stations stretching from the Thames to the Orkneys and commanding both outlets from the North Sea; the destroyers and submarines swarmed in the Channel and off the sand-locked German bases. The hour

had struck, everything had been done exactly as had been planned. The German Fleet crept into safety through the back door of the Kattegat and Kiel, and on the evening of August 4th, the British Government declared war.

Germany, who thought to catch the Navy asleep, was herself caught. She had never believed that we either would or could fight for the integrity of Belgium. She went on blindly in her appointed way until suddenly her sight returned in a flash of bitter realisation that the Royal Navy, without firing a single shot, had won the first tremendous decisive, irreparable battle in the coming world's war. Her chance of success at sea had disappeared for ever. Before her lay a long cruel dragging fight with the seas closed to her merchant ships and her whole Empire in a state of blockade. No wonder that then, and since, Germany's fiercest passion of hate has been directed against us, and above all against that Royal Navy which shields us and strikes for us. Before a shot had been fired she saw herself outwitted, outmanœuvred, outfought. "Gott strafe England!"

CHAPTER III

THE GREAT VICTORY

In naval warfare there are many actions but few battles. An action is any engagement between war vessels of any size, but a battle is a contest between ships of the battle-line—sometimes called "capital ships" upon the results of which depends the vital issues of a war. During the whole of the long contest with Napoleon, there were only two battles of this decisive kind—the Nile and Trafalgar.

And although the fighting by sea and land went on for ten years after Trafalgar had given to us the supreme control of the world's seas, there were no more naval battles. Battles at sea are very rare because, when fought out, they are so crushingly decisive. This characteristic feature of the great naval battle has been greatly emphasised by modern conditions. Upon land armies have outgrown the very earth itself; fighting frontiers have become lines of trenches; battles have become the mere swaying of these trench lines—a ripple here or there marks a success or failure—but the lines re-formed remain. Even after weeks or months of fighting, if the lines remain unbroken, neither side has reached a decision. War upon land between great forces is a long drawn-out agony of attrition.

But while battles upon land have become much less decisive than in the simpler days of small armies and feeble weapons, fighting upon the sea has become much quicker, much more crushingly final, in its effects and results than in the days of our grandfathers. Speed and gun power are now everything. The faster and more powerful fleet—more powerful in its capacity for dealing accurate and destructive blows—can annihilate its enemy completely within the brief hours of a single day. The more powerful and faster his ships the less will the victor himself suffer. Only under one condition can a defeated fleet escape annihilation, and that is when the lack of light or of sea room snatches from the victor a final decision. If an enemy can get away under shelter of his shore fortifications, or within the protection of his mine-fields, he can defy pursuit; but if there be ample room and daylight Speed and Power wielded by men such as ours, will prevail with absolute mathematical certainty—the losers will be sunk, the victors will, by comparison, be little damaged. Every considerable engagement during the war has added convincing proof to the conclusions which our Navy drew from the decisive battle in the Sea of Tsushima between the Japanese and the Russians, and the not less decisive action upon a smaller scale in which the Americans destroyed the Spanish squadron off Santiago, Cuba. In both cases the losers were destroyed while the victors suffered little hurt. These outstanding lessons were not lost upon the Royal Navy, its officers had themselves seen both fights, and so in its silent way the Navy pressed upon its course always seeking after more speed, more gun power,

and above all more numbers. "Only numbers can annihilate," said Napoleon, and what the Emperor declared to be true of land fighting is the more true of fighting by sea. Only numbers can annihilate.

Upon the evening of August 4th, 1914, I was sitting in a London office beside a ticking tape machine awaiting the message that the Germans had declined our ultimatum to withdraw from Belgium, and that war had been declared. "There will be a big sea battle this evening," observed my companion. "There has been a big battle," observed I, "but it is now over." Although he and I used similar language we attached to the words very different meanings. He thought, as the bulk of the British people thought at that time, that the British and German battle fleets would meet and fight off the Frisian Islands. But I meant, and felt sure, that the last thing our Grand Fleet desired was to fight in restricted and dangerous waters, amid the perils of mines and submarines, when it had already won the greatest fight of the war without firing a shot or risking a single ship or man. There had been no "battle" in the popular sense, but there had in fact been achieved a tremendous dicisive victory which through all the long months to follow would dominate the whole war by sea and by land. Our great battleships were at that moment cruising between Scapa Flow in the Orkneys and the Cromarty Firth on the north-eastern shores of Scotland. Our fastest battle cruisers were in the Firth of Forth together with many of the better pre-Dreadnought battleships which, though too slow for a fleet action, had heavy batteries available

for a close fight in narrow waters. Many other older and slower battleships and cruisers were in the Thames. The narrow straits of Dover were thickly patrolled by destroyers and submarines, and more submarines and destroyers were on watch off the mouths of the Weser, the Jade, the Elbe and the Ems. Light cruisers hovered still farther to the north where the Skagerrak opens between Denmark and the Norwegian coast. The North Sea had become a *mare clausum*—no longer, as the mapmakers term it, a German Ocean, but one which at a single stroke had become overwhelmingly British.

Take a map of the North Sea and consider with me for a moment the relative strengths and dispositions of the opposing battle fleets. There was nothing complicated or super-subtle about the Royal Navy's plans; on the contrary they had that beautiful compelling simplicity which is the characteristic feature of all really great designs whether in war or in peace.

There are two outlets to the North Sea, one wide to the north and west beyond the Shetlands, the other narrow and shallow to the south-west through the Straits of Dover. The Straits are only twenty-one miles wide; opposite the north of Scotland the Sea is 300 miles wide. But before German battleships or cruisers could get away towards the wide north-western outlet beyond the Shetlands they would have to steam some 400 miles north of Heligoland. Except for the Pacific Squadron based upon Tsing-tau in the Far East and cruising upon the east and west coasts of Mexico, all the fleets of our enemy were at his North Sea ports or in the Baltic—a land-locked sheet

of water which for the moment is out of our picture. From Heligoland to Scapa Flow in the Orkneys—where Admiral Jellicoe had his headquarters and where he had under his hand twenty-two of our most powerful battleships—is less than 550 miles. Jellicoe had also with him large numbers of armoured and light cruisers. In the Firth of Forth, less than 500 miles from Heligoland, Admiral Beatty had five of the fastest and most powerful battle cruisers afloat and great quantities of lighter cruisers and destroyers. In the Thames, about 350 miles from Heligoland, lay most of our slower and less powerful pre-Dreadnought battleships and cruisers, vessels of a past generation in naval construction, but in their huge numbers and collective armaments a very formidable force to encounter in the narrow waters of the Straits of Dover.

Three possible courses of action lay before the German Naval Staff. They had at their disposal seventeen battleships and battle cruisers built since the first *Dreadnought* revolutionised the battle line, but, as I have already pointed out, these vessels, class for class and gun for gun, were lighter, slower, and less well armed than were the twenty-seven great war vessels at the disposal of Jellicoe and Beatty. The Germans could have tried to break away to the north with their whole battle fleet, escorting all their lighter cruisers, in the hope that while the battle fleets were engaged the cruisers might escape round the north of Scotland, and get upon our trade routes in the Atlantic. That was their first possible line of action—a desperate one, since Jellicoe and Beatty with much stronger forces lay upon the flank of their

THE NORTH SEA.

course to the north, and the preponderating strength and swiftness of our light and heavy cruisers would have meant, in all human probability, not only the utter destruction of the enemy's battle fleet but also the wiping out of his would-be raiders. Our cruisers could have closed the passages between the Orkneys and Iceland long before the Germans could have reached them. This first heroic dash for the free spaces of the outer seas would have been so eminently gratifying to us that it is scarcely surprising that the Germans denied us its blissful realisation.

The second possible course, apparently less heroic but in its ultimate results probably as completely destructive for the enemy as the first course, would have been to bear south-west, hugging the shallows as closely as might be possible, and to endeavour to break a way through the Straits of Dover and the English Channel. From Heligoland to the Straits is over 350 miles, and we should have known all about the German dash long before they could have reached the Narrows. Those Narrow Seas are like the neck of a bottle which would have been corked most effectually by our serried masses of pre-Dreadnought battleships and cruisers interspersed by swarming hundreds of submarines and destroyers with their vicious torpedo stings. We can quite understand how the Germans, who had read Sir Percy Scott's observations of a month or two before on the deadliness of submarines in narrow waters, liked a dash for the Straits as little as they relished a battle with Jellicoe and Beatty in the far north, more especially as their line of retreat would have been cut off by the descent from their northern

fastnesses of our battle fleets. Not then, nor a week or two later when we were passing our Expeditionary Force across the Channel, did the Germans attempt to break through the Straits and cut us off from our Allies the French.

The third course was the one which the Germans in fact took. It was the famous course of Brer Rabbit, to lie low and say nuffin', and to wait for happier times when perchance the raids of their own submarines, and our losses from mines, might so far diminish our fighting strength as to permit them to risk a Battle of the Giants with some little prospect of success. And in adopting this waiting policy they did what we least desired and what, therefore, was the safest for them and most embarrassing for us. Never at any time did we attempt to prevent the German battle fleets from coming out. We no more blockaded them than Nelson a hundred years earlier blockaded the French at Toulin and Brest. We maintained, as Nelson did, a perpetual unsleeping watch on the enemy's movements, but our desire always was the same as Nelson's—to let the enemy come out far enough to give us space and time within which to compass his complete and final destruction.

Although the Germans, by adopting a waiting policy, prevented the Royal Navy from fulfilling its first duty—the seeking out and destruction of an enemy's fighting fleets—their inaction emphasised the completeness of the Victory of Brains and Soul which the Navy had won during those few days before the outbreak of war. It was because our mobilisation had been so prompt and complete, it was because the disposition of our

fleets had been so perfectly conceived, that the Germans dared not risk a battle with us in the open and were unable to send out their cruisers to cut off our trading ships and to break our communications with France. Although the enemy's fleets had not been destroyed, they had been rendered very largely impotent. We held, more completely than we did even after the crowning mercy of Trafalgar, the command of the seas of the world. The first great battle was bloodless but complete, it had won for us and for the civilised world a very great victory, and the Royal Navy had never in its long history more fully realised and revealed its tremendous unconquerable Soul.

. . . . .

It may be of some little interest, now that the veil of secrecy can be partly raised, to describe the opposing battle fleets upon which rested the decision of victory or defeat. Before the war it had become the habit of many critics, both naval and civilian, to exalt the striking power of the torpedo craft—both destroyers and submarines—and to talk of the great battleship as an obsolete monster, as some vast Mammoth at the mercy of a wasp with a poison sting. But the war has shown that the Navy was right to hold to the deep beliefs, the outcome of all past experience, that supremacy in the battle line means supremacy in Sea Control. The smaller vessels, cruisers, and mosquito craft, are vitally necessary for their several rôles,—without them the great ships cannot carry out a commercial blockade, cannot protect trade or transports, cannot conduct those hundreds

of operations both of offence and defence which fall within the duties of a complete Navy. But the ultimate decision rests with the Battle Fleets. They are the Fount of Power. While they are supreme, the seas are free to the smaller active vessels; without such supremacy, the seas are closed to all craft, except to submarines and, as events have proved, to a large extent even to those under-water wasps.

In August, 1914, our Battle Fleets available for the North Sea—and at the moment of supreme test no vessels, however powerful, which were not on the spot were of any account at all—were not at their full strength. The battleships were all at home—the ten Dreadnoughts, each with ten 12-inch guns, the four Orions, the four K.G.V.s and the four Iron Dukes, each with their ten 13.5-inch guns far more powerful than the earlier Dreadnoughts,—and were all fully mobilised by August 3rd. But of our nine fast and invaluable battle cruisers as many as four were far away. The *Australia* was at the other side of the globe, and three others had a short time before been despatched to the Mediterranean. Beatty had the *Lion, Queen Mary,* and *Princess Royal,* each with eight 13.5-inch guns and twenty-nine knots of speed, in addition to the *New Zealand,* and *Invincible* each with eight 12-inch guns. The First Lord of the Admiralty announced quite correctly that we had mobilised thirty-one ships of the battle line, but actually in the North Sea at their war stations upon that fateful evening of August 4th—which now seems so long ago—Jellicoe and Beatty had twenty-seven only of first line ships. They were enough as it proved, but one rather

grudged at that time, those three in the Mediterranean and the *Australia* at the Antipodes. Had there been a battle of the Giants we should have needed them all, for only numbers can annihilate. Jellicoe had, in addition to those which I have reckoned, the *Lord Nelson* and *Agamemnon*—pre-Dreadnoughts, each with four 12-inch guns and ten 9.2-inch guns—useful ships but not of the first battle line.

Opposed to our twenty-seven available monsters the Germans had under their hands eighteen completed vessels of their first line. I do not count in this select company the armoured cruiser *Blücher*, with her twelve 8-inch guns, which was sunk later on in the Dogger Bank action by the 13.5-inch weapons of Beatty's great cruisers. Neither do I count the fine cruiser *Goeben*, a fast vessel with ten 11-inch guns which, like our three absent battle cruisers, was in the Mediterranean. The *Goeben* escaped later to the Dardanelles and ceased to be on the North Sea roll of the German High Seas Fleet.

Germany had, then, eighteen battleships and battle cruisers, and had it been known to the public that our apparent superiority in available numbers was only 50 per cent. in the North Sea, many good people might have trembled for the safety of their homes and for the honour of their wives and daughters. But luckily they did not know, for they could with difficulty have been brought to understand that naval superiority rests more in speed and in quality and in striking power than in the mere numbers of ships. When I have said that numbers only can annihilate, I mean, of course, numbers of equal or superior

ships. In quality of ships and especially of men, in speed and in striking power, our twenty-seven ships had fully double the strength of the eighteen Germans who might have been opposed to them in battle. None of our vessels carried anything smaller—for battle—than 12-inch guns, and fifteen of them bore within their turrets the new 13.5-inch guns of which the weight of shell and destructive power were more than 50 per cent. greater than that of the earlier 12-inch weapons. On the other hand, four of the German battleships (the *Nassau* class) carried 11-inch guns and were fully two knots slower in speed than any of the British first line. Three of their battle cruisers also had 11-inch guns. While therefore we had guns of 12 and 13.5 inches the Germans had nothing more powerful to oppose to us than guns of 11 and 12 inches. Ship for ship the Germans were about two knots slower than ourselves, so that we always had the advantage of manœuvre, the choosing of the most effective range, and the power of preventing by our higher speed the escape of a defeated foe. Had the Germans come north into the open sea, we could have chosen absolutely, by virtue of our greater speed, gun power and numbers, the conditions under which an action should have been fought and how it should have been brought to a finish.

An inch or two in the bore of a naval gun, a few feet more or less of length, may not seem much to some of my readers. But they should remember that the weight of a shell, and the weight of its explosive charge, vary as the *cube* of its diameter. A 12-inch shell is a third heavier than one of 11 inches, while a 13.5-inch shell is more than

one-half heavier than a 12-inch and twice as heavy as one of 11 inches only. The power of the bursting charge varies not as the weight, but as the *square* of the weight of a shell. The Germans were very slow to learn the naval lesson of the superiority of the bigger gun and the heavier shell. It was not until after the Dogger Bank action when Beatty's monstrous 13.5-inch shells broke in a terrible storm upon their lighter-armed battle cruisers that the truth fully came home to them. Had Jellicoe and Beatty fought the German Fleet in the wide spaces of the upper North Sea in August, 1914, we should have opposed a fighting efficiency in power and weight of guns of more than two to one. Rarely have the precious qualities of insight and foresight been more strikingly shown forth than in the superiority in ships, in guns, and in men that the Royal Navy was able to range against their German antagonists in those early days of August, when the fortunes of the Empire would have turned upon the chances of a naval battle. In the long contest waged between 1900 and 1914, in the bloodless war of peace, the spiritual force of the Navy had gained the victory; the enemy had been beaten, and knew it, and thenceforward for many months, until the spring of 1916, he abode in his tents. Whenever he did venture forth it was not to give battle but to kill some women, some babes, and then to scuttle home to proclaim the dazzling triumph which "Gott" had granted to his arms.

. . . . .

It may seem to many a fact most extraordinary that in August, 1914, not one of our great ships

of the first class—the so-called "super-Dreadnoughts"—upon which we depended for the domination of the seas and the security of the Empire, not one was more than three years old. The four Orions—*Orion, Conqueror, Thunderer* and *Monarch*—were completed in 1911 and 1912. The four K.G. Fives—*King George V, Centurion, Ajax,* and *Audacious* in 1912 and 1913; and the four Iron Dukes—*Iron Duke, Marlborough, Emperor of India* and *Benbow*—in 1914. All these new battleships carried ten 13.5-inch guns and had an effective speed of nearly 23 knots. The super-battle cruisers—*Lion, Queen Mary* and *Princess Royal*—were completed in 1912, carried eight 13.5-inch guns, and had a speed of over 29 knots. Upon these fifteen ships, not one of which was more than three years old, depended British Sea Power. The Germans had nothing, when the war broke out, which was comparable with these fifteen splendid monsters. Their first line battleships and battle cruisers completed in the corresponding years, from 1911 to 1914—their "opposite numbers" as the Navy calls them—were not superior in speed, design and power of guns to our Dreadnought battleships and battle cruisers, which had already passed into the second class, and which, long before the war ended, had sunk to the third class. But the newness and overwhelming superiority of our true first line do not surprise those who realise that these fifteen great ships were the fine flower of our naval brains and soul. The new Navy of the three years immediately preceding the war was simply the old Navy writ large. As the need had arisen, so had the Navy expanded to meet it. The designs for these

fifteen ships did not fall down from Heaven; they were worked out in naval brains years before they found their material expression in steel. The vast ships issued forth upon the seas, crushingly superior to anything which our enemy could put into commission against us, because our naval brains were superior to his and our naval Soul was to his as a white glowing flame to a tallow candle. In a sentence, while Germany was laboriously copying our Dreadnoughts we had cast their designs aside, and were producing at a speed, with which he could not compete, Orions, K.G. Fives, Iron Dukes and Lions.

. . . . .

The North Sea, large as it may appear upon a map, is all too small for the manœuvres of swift modern fleets. No part of that stretch of water which lies south of the Dogger Bank—say, from the Yorkshire coast to Jutland—is far enough removed from the German bases to allow of a sure and decisive fleet action. There was no possibility here of a clean fight to a finish. An enemy might be hammered severely, some of his vessels might be sunk—Beatty showed the German battle cruisers what we could do even in a stern chase at full speed—but he could not be destroyed. On the afternoon and night of May 31st–June 1st, 1916, the Grand Fleet had the enemy enveloped and ripe for destruction, but were robbed of full victory by mist and darkness and the lack of sea room. Nelson spoke with the Soul of the Navy when he declared that a battle was not won when any enemy ship was enabled to escape destruction. So while the divisions of the Grand Fleet, and

especially the fastest battle cruisers of some twenty-eight to twenty-nine knots speed (about thirty-three miles per hour) neglected no opportunity to punish the enemy ships that might venture forth, what every man from Jellicoe to the smallest ship boy really longed and prayed for, was a brave ample battle in the deep wide waters of the north. Here there was room for a newer and greater Trafalgar, though even here the sea was none too spacious. Great ships, which move with the speed of a fairly fast train and shoot to the extreme limits of the visible horizon, really require a boundless Ocean in which to do their work with naval thoroughness. But the upper North Sea would have served, and there the Grand Fleet waited, ever at work though silent, ever watchfully ready for the Great Day. And while it waited it controlled by the mere fact of its tremendous power of numbers, weight, and position the destinies of the civilised world.

. . . . .

The task of the Royal Navy in the war would have been much simpler had the geography of the North Sea been designed by Providence to assist us in our struggle with Germany. We made the best of it, but were always sorely handicapped by it. The North Sea was too shallow, too well adapted for the promiscuous laying of mines, and too wide at its northern outlet for a really close blockade. Had the British Isles been slewed round twenty degrees further towards Norway, so that the outlet to the north was as narrow as that to the English Channel—and had there been a harbour big enough for the Grand Fleet between the Thames

and the Firth of Forth—then our main bases could have been placed nearer to Germany and our striking power enormously increased. We could then have placed an absolute veto upon the raiding dashes which the Germans now and then made upon the eastern English seaboard. As the position in fact existed we could not place any of our first line ships further south than the Firth of Forth—and could place even there only our fastest vessels—without removing them too far from the Grand Fleet's main concentration at Scapa Flow in the Orkneys. Invergordon in the Cromarty Firth was used as a rest and replenishing station. The German raids—what Admiral Jellicoe called their tactics of "tip and run"—were exasperating, but they could not be allowed to interfere with the naval dispositions upon which the whole safety of the Empire depended. We had to depend on the speed of our battle cruisers in the Firth of Forth to give us opportunity to intercept and punish the enemy. The German battle cruisers which fired upon Scarborough, Whitby, and the Hartlepools were nearly caught —a few minutes more of valuable time and a little less of sea haze would have meant their destruction. A second raid was anticipated and the resulting Dogger Bank action taught the enemy that the Navy had a long arm and long sight. For a year he digested the lesson, and did not try his luck again until April, 1916, when he dashed forth and raided Lowestoft on the Norfolk coast. The story of this raid is interesting. The Grand Fleet had been out a day or two before upon what it called a "stunt," a parade in force of the Jutland coast and the entrance to the Skaggerak.

It had hunted for the Germans and found them not, and returning to the far north re-coaled the ships. The Germans, with a cleverness which does them credit, launched their Lowestoft raid immediately after the "stunt" and before the battle cruisers, re-coaling, could be ready to dash forth. Even as it was they did not cut much time to waste. It was a dash across, a few shots, and a dash back.

Then was made a redisposition of the British Squadrons, not in the least designed to protect the east coast of England—though the enemy was led to believe so—but so to strengthen Beatty's Battle Cruiser Squadrons that the enemy's High Seas Fleet, when met, could be fought and held until Jellicoe with his battle squadrons could arrive and destroy it. The re-disposition consisted of two distinct movements. First: the pre-Dreadnought battleships and battle cruisers which had been stationed in the Forth were sent to the Thames. Second: Admiral Evan-Thomas's fifth battle squadron of five Queen Elizabeth battleships (built since the war began)—of twenty-five knots speed and each carrying eight 15-inch guns—*Queen Elizabeth*, *Barham*, *Valiant*, *Warspite*, and *Malaya*—were sent from Scapa to the Firth of Forth to reinforce Beatty and to give him a support which would enable him and Evan-Thomas to fight a delaying action against any force which the Germans could put to sea. Three of the Invincible type of battle cruisers were moved from the Forth to Scapa to act as Jellicoe's advance guard, and to enable contact to be quickly made between Beatty and Jellicoe. But for this change in the Grand Fleet's dispositions, which enabled

the four splendid battleships—*Barham, Valiant, Warspite* and *Malaya* (the *Queen Elizabeth* was in dock)—to engage the whole High Seas Fleet on the afternoon of May 31st, 1916, while Beatty headed off the German battle cruisers and opened the way for Jellicoe's enveloping movement, the Battle of Jutland could never have been fought.

CHAPTER IV

WITH THE GRAND FLEET: A NORTH SEA "STUNT"

"So young and so untender!"—KING LEAR

FOR more than eighteen months the Grand Fleet had been at war. It was the centre of the great web of blockading patrols, mine-sweeping flotillas, submarine hunters, and troop-transport convoys, and yet as a Fleet it had never seen the enemy nor fired a shot except in practice. The fast battle cruisers, stationed nearest to the enemy in the Firth of Forth had grabbed all the sport that was going in the Bight of Heligoland, or in the Dogger Bank action. But though several of the vessels belonging to the Grand Fleet had picked up some share in the fighting—at the Falkland Islands and in the Dardanelles—Jellicoe with his splendid squadrons still waited patiently for the Day. The perils from submarines had been mastered, and those from mines, cast into the seas by a reckless enemy, had been made of little account by continuous sweeping. The early eagerness of officers and men had given place to a sedate patience. At short intervals the vast Fleet would issue forth and, attended by its screen of destroyers and light cruisers, would make a stately parade of the North Sea. All were prepared for battle when it came, but as the weeks passed into months and

the months into years, the parades became practice "stunts," stripped of all expectation of encountering the enemy and devoid of the smallest excitement. The Navy knows little of excitement or of thrills—it has too much to think about and to do. At Action Stations in a great ship, not one man in ten ever sees anything but the job immediately before him. The enemy, if enemy there be in sight from the spotting tops, is hidden from nine-tenths of the officers and crew by steel walls. So, if even a battle be devoid of thrills—except those painfully vamped up upon paper after the event—a "stunt," without expectation of battle, becomes the most placid of sea exercises. I will describe such a "stunt" as faithfully as may be, adding thereto a little imaginary incident which will, I hope, gratify the reader, even though he may be assured in advance that I invented it for his entertainment.

. . . . .

It was the beginning of the afternoon watch, and the vast harbour of Scapa Flow was very still and sunny and silent. The hands were sitting about smoking, or "caulking" after their dinner. and the noisome "both watches" call was still some fifteen minutes away. But though everything appeared to be perfectly normal and sedate, an observant Officer or the Watch, looking through the haze within which the Fleet flagship lay almost invisible against the dark hills, could see a little wisp of colour float to her yards and remain. Forthwith up to the yards of every vessel in harbour ran an exactly similar hoist, and as it was dipped on the flagship it disappeared from sight upon all.

It was the signal to prepare for sea, and now mark exactly how such a signal—seemingly so momentous to a civilian—is received by the Navy at war.

If the Officer of the Watch upon a ship knows his signals he will put his glass back under his arm and think, "Good, I've got off two days' harbour watch keeping at least; my first and middle, too." The signal hands on the bridge look at the calm sea, which will for once not drench them and skin their hands on the halliards, and gratefully regard the windless sky under which hoists will slide obediently up the mast and not tug savagely like a pair of dray horses. The signal bos'n turns purple with fierce resentment which he does not really feel, for he will be up all day and half the night beside the Officer of the Watch on the bridge running the manœuvring signals, and he loves to feel indispensable. There is no excitement on the mess decks, only a smile since sea means a period of peace of mind when parades and polishings are suspended, and one keeps three watches or sleeps in a turret all night and half the day. Besides there is deep down in the minds of all the hope that, in spite of a hundred duds and wash-outs and disappointments, this trip may just possibly lead to that glorious scrap that all have been longing for, and have come to regard as about as imminent as the Day of Judgment. The gunnery staff look important and the "garage men"—armourers and electricians, commonly called L.T.O.s, in unspeakable overalls carrying spanners and circuit-testing lamps—float round the turrets looking for little faults and flies in the amber. The bad sailors shiver, though there is hope even for them in the silence and

calmness of the sky. There is no obvious bustle of preparation, for the best of reasons: there is nothing to do except to close sea doors and batten down; the Fleet is Already Prepared. Let the reader please brush from his mind any idea of excitement, any idea of unusualness, any idea of bustle; none of these things exist when the Grand Fleet puts to sea. The signal which ran up to the yards of the flagship and was repeated by all the vessels in the Fleet read: "Prepare to leave harbour," and simply meant that the Fleet was going out, probably that night, and that no officer could leave his ship to go and dine with his friends in some other ship's wardroom.

By and by up goes another little hoist, also universally acknowledged; this makes the stokers and the engine room artificers, and the purple-ringed, harassed-looking engineer officers jump lively down below so as to cut the time notice for full steam down by half and be ready to advance the required speed by three knots or so.

The sun dips and evening comes on; a glorious evening such as one only gets fairly far north in the spring, and a signal comes again, this time: "Raise steam for — knots and report." Now one sees smoke pouring forth continuously from the coal-driven ships, and every now and then a great gust of cold oil vapour from the aristocratic new battleships whose fires are fed with oil only.

Dinner in the wardroom starts in a blaze of light and a buzz of talking, and the band plays cheerfully on the half-deck outside. The King's health is drunk and the band settles down to an hour of ragtime and waltzes, the older men sip

their port, and the younger ones drift out to where the gun room is already dancing lustily. Our wonderful Navy dances beautifully, and loves every evening after dinner to execute the most difficult of music-hall steps in the midst of a wild Corybantic orgie. In the choosing of partners age and rank count for nothing. The wardroom and gun room after dinner are members of one happy family.

Then suddenly the scene is transformed. In the doorway of the anteroom and dining-room appears framed the tall form of the Owner, who in a dozen words tells that the Huns are out. They are in full force strolling merrily along a westerly course far away to the south. Already the battle-cruisers from the Forth are seeking touch with the enemy, and the light stuff and the advance destroyers, the screen of the Grand Fleet, have already flown from Scapa to make contact with the battle cruisers. Our armoured cruisers have moved out in advance and the Grand Fleet itself is about to go.

As the wardroom gathers round the Owner, the band packs up hastily and vanishes down the big hatch into the barracks or Marines' mess to stow its instruments and put on warm clothing. Those snotties who have the first watch scatter, and the remainder gather in the gun room to turn over the chances on the morrow which seems to their eager souls more mist-shrouded and promising than have most morrows during the long months of waiting.

. . . . .

Let us now shift the scene to the compass plat-

form or Monkey's Island of one of the great new oil-fired battleships of the Fifth Battle Squadron, one of the five ships known as Queen Elizabeths —all added to the Navy since the war began and all members of the most powerful and fastest squadron of battleships upon the seas of the world. They have a speed of twenty-five knots, carry eight 15-inch guns in four turrets arranged on the middle line, and have upon each side a battery of six 6-inch guns in casemates for dealing faithfully and expeditiously with enemy destroyers who may seek to rush in with the torpedo. As our ship passes out into the night, the port and starboard 6-inch batteries are fully manned and loaded, and up on the compass platform, in control of these batteries, are two young officers—a subaltern of Marines and a naval sub-lieutenant—to each of whom is allotted one of the batteries. One has charge of the port side, the other of the starboard. I have called the Navy a young man's service, and here we see a practical example; for beneath us is the last word in super-battleships dependent for protection against sudden torpedo attack upon the bright eyes and cool trained brains of two youngsters counting not more than forty years between them. I will resume my description and put it in the mouth of one of these youthful control officers—the Marine subaltern who a year before had been a boy at school:

"Going to the gun room I warn the Sub, my trusted friend and fellow control officer on the starboard side, and depart to my cabin, where I dress as for a motor run on a cold day. I have a great Canadian fur cap and gorgeous gloves which defeat the damp and cold even of the

North Sea. As I stand on the quarter deck for a moment's glance at the sunset, which I cannot hope to describe, there comes a sound, a sort of hollow metallic clap and a flicker of flame. They are testing electric circuits in the 6-inch battery, and No. 5 gun port has fired a tube. These sounds recur at short intervals from both sides for a couple of minutes. Then the gun layers are satisfied and stop. I go along the upper deck above the battery—which is in casemates between decks—and reach the pagoda, and then pass up, up, through a little steel door, above the signal bridge and the searchlights to the airy, roomy Monkey's Island with the foremast in the middle of the floor, holding the spotting top—usually known as the topping spot, an inversion which ironically describes its exposed position in action—poised above our heads. There is a little charthouse forward of the mast on its raised daïs of the compass platform proper, where the High Priest busies himself between his two altars, the old and the new.

. . . . .

"Looking ahead it is already dark. The sea is still and the ships are dim black masses. We have already weighed—the Cable Officer's call went as I passed along the upper deck—and are gliding to our station in the Squadron, all of which are moving away past those ships which have not yet begun to go out. Gradually we leave the rest of the Grand Fleet behind, for our great speed gives us the place of honour, and so pass outside and breast the swell of the open sea.

"We find that the wind has risen outside the

harbour, but there has not yet been time for a serious swell to get up. The water heaves slowly, breaking into a sharp clap which sets our attendant destroyers dancing like corks, but of which we take no notice whatever. This is one way in which the big ships score, though they miss the full joy of life and the passion for war which can be felt only in a destroyer flotilla. Our destroyer escort has arisen apparently from nowhere and we all plough on together. At intervals we tack a few points and the manœuvre is passed from ship to ship with flash lamps. Behind us, though we cannot see them, follows the rest of the Grand Fleet, in squadrons line ahead, trailing out up to, and beyond the horizon.

. . . . .

"That night watch on my first big 'stunt' lives in my memory. Never before had I been by myself in control of a battery of six 6-inch guns for use against light fast enemy craft, which might try the forlorn hazard of a dash to within easy torpedo range of about 500 yards. Torpedoes are useless against rapidly moving ships unless fired quite close up. This form of attack has been very rare, and has always failed, but it remains an ever-present possibility. Even in clear weather with the searchlights on—which are connected up to me and move with me—one cannot see for more than a mile at night, and a destroyer could rush in at full speed upon a zig-zag track to within point blank range in about a minute. Direct-aimed fire would fail at such a rapidly moving mark. One has to put up a curtain of fire, fast and furious for the charging vessel to

run into. But there is no time to lose, no time at all.

"There was a bright moon upon that first night, so everything was less unpleasant and nerve-racking than it might have been. Somehow in the Navy one seems to shed all feelings of nervousness. Perhaps this is the result of splendid health, the tonic sea air, and the atmosphere of serene competent resourcefulness which pervades the whole Service. We are all trained to think only of the job on hand and never of ourselves.

"From the height of the compass platform there is no appearance of freeboard. The ship's deck seems to lie flush with the water, and one sees it as a light-coloured shaped plank—such as one cut out of wood when a child and fitted with a toy mast. The outline is not regularly curved but sliced away at the forecastle with straight sides running back parallel with one another. 'A' turret is in the middle of the forecastle, which is very narrow; and behind it upon a higher level stands 'B' with its long glistening guns sticking out over 'A's' back. From aloft the turrets look quite small, though each is big enough for a hundred men to stand comfortably on the roof. The slope upwards is continued by the great armoured conning tower behind and higher than 'B' turret, and directly above and behind that again stands the compass platform. Overhead towers the draughty spotting top for the turret guns. Behind again, upon the same level as my platform, are the two great flat funnels spouting out dense clouds of oily smoke. When there is a following wind the spotting top is smothered with smoke, and the officers perched there cough

and gasp and curse. It is then worthy of its name, for it is in truth a 'topping spot!'

"We are a very fast ship, but at this height the impression of speed is lost. The ship seems to plough in leisurely fashion through the black white-crested waves, now and then throwing up a cloud of spray as high as my platform, to descend crashing upon 'A' turret, which is none too dry a place to sleep in. We don't roll appreciably, but slide up and down with a dignified pitch, exactly like the motion of that patent rocking-horse which I used to love in my old nursery.

"Down below, though they are hidden from me by the deck, the gunners stand ready behind their casemates, waiting for my signal. The guns are loaded and trained, the crews stand at their stations, shells and cordite charges are ready to their hands. The gun-layers are connected up with me and are ready to respond instantly to my order.

"So the watch passes; my relief comes, and I go.

. . . .

"I was on watch again in the forenoon, and then one could see something of the Grand Fleet and realise its tremendous silent power. We had shortened speed so as not to leave the supporting Squadrons too far behind and one could see them clearly, long lines of great ships, stretching far beyond the visible horizon. Nearest to us was the cream of the Fleet, the incomparable Second Squadron—the four Orions and four K.G. Fives —which with their eighty 13.5-inch guns possess a concentrated power far beyond anything flying Fritz's flag. Upon us of the Queen Elizabeths,

and upon the Second Battle Squadron, rests the Mastery of the Seas. Far away on the port quarter could be seen the leading ships of the First Battle Squadron of Dreadnoughts, all ships of 12-inch guns, all good enough for Fritz but not in the same class with the Orions, the K.G. Fives or with us. Away to starboard came more Dreadnoughts, and Royal Sovereigns—as powerful as ourselves but not so fast—and odd ships like the seven-turreted *Agincourt* and the 14-inch gunned *Canada*. It was a great sight, one to impress Fritz and to make his blood turn to water.

"For he could see us as we thrashed through the seas. It looked no larger than a breakfast sausage, and I had some difficulty in making it out—even after the Officer of the Watch had shown it to me. But at last I saw the watching Zeppelin—a mere speck thousands of feet up and perhaps fifty miles distant. Our seaplanes roared away, rising one after the other from our carrying-ships like huge seagulls, and Herr Zeppelin melted into the far-off background of clouds. He had seen us, and that was enough to keep the Germans at a very safe distance. He, or others like him, had seen, too, our battle cruisers which, sweeping far down to the south, essayed to play the hammer to our most massive anvil. In the evening, precisely at ten o'clock, the German Nordeich wireless sent out a volley of heavy chaff, assuring us that we had only dared to come out when satisfied that their High Seas Fleet was in the Baltic. It wasn't in the Baltic; at that moment it was scuttling back to the minefields behind Heligoland. But what could we do?

When surprise is no longer possible at sea, what can one do? It is all very exasperating, but somehow rather amusing.

"We joined the Battle Cruiser Squadron in the south and swept the 'German Ocean' right up to the minefields off the Elbe and Weser, and north to the opening of the Skaggerak. Further we could not go, for any foolish attempt to 'dig out' Fritz might have cost us half the Grand Fleet. Then our 'stunt' ended, we turned and sought once more our northern fastnesses."

. . . . .

It was during the return from this big sweep of the North Sea that our young Marine chanced upon his baptism of fire and his first Great Adventure. His chance came suddenly and unexpectedly —as chances usually come at sea—and I will let him tell of it himself in that personal vivid style of his with which I cannot compete.

"The wonderful thing has happened! I have been in action! It was not a great battle; it was not what the hardiest evening newspaper could blaze upon its bills as a Naval Action in the North Sea. From first to last it endured for one minute and forty seconds; yet for me it was the Battle of the Century. For it was my own, my very own, my precious ewe lamb of a battle. It was fought by me on my compass platform and by my bold gunners in the 6-inch casemates below. All by our little selves we did the trick, before any horrid potentates could interfere, and the enemy is at the bottom of the deep blue sea—it is not really very deep and certainly is not blue.

What I most love about my battle is that it was fought so quickly that no one—and especially none of those tiresome folks called superior officers—had any opportunity of kicking me off the stage. All was over, quite over, and my guns had ceased firing before the Owner had tumbled out of his sea cabin in the pagoda, and best of all before my gunnery chief had any chance to snatch the control away from me. He came charging up, red and panting, while the air still thudded with my curtain fire, and wanted to know what the devil I was playing at. 'I have sunk the enemy, sir,' I said, saluting. 'What enemy?' cried he, 'I never saw any enemy.' 'He's gone, sir,' said I standing at attention. 'I hit him with three 6-inch shells and he is very dead indeed.' 'It's all right,' called out the Officer of the Watch, laughing. 'This young Soldier here has been and gone and sunk one of Fritz's destroyers. He burst her all to pieces in a manner most emphatic. I call it unkind. But he always was a heartless young beast.' Then the Bloke, who is a very decent old fellow, cooled down, said I was a lucky young dog, and received my official report. He carried it off to the Lord High Captain—whom the Navy people call the Owner—and the great man was so very kind as to speak to me himself. He said that I had done very well and that he would make a note of my prompt attention to duty. I don't suppose that I shall ever again fight so completely satisfying a naval battle, for I am not likely to come across another one small enough to keep wholly to myself.

"I will tell you all about it. I was up on my platform at my watch. My battery of 6-inch guns

was down below, all loaded with high explosive shell, weighing 100 lbs. each. All the gunners were ready for anything which might happen, but expecting nothing. So they had stood and waited during a hundred watches. It was greying towards dawn, but there was a good bit of haze and the sea was choppy. The old ship was doing her rocking-horse trick as usual, and also as usual I was feeling a bit squeamish but nothing to worry about. As the light increased I could see about 2,000 yards, more or less—I am not much good yet at judging sea distances; they look so short. The Officer of the Watch was walking up and down on the look-out. 'Hullo,' I heard him say, 'what's that dark patch yonder three points on the port bow?' This meant thirty degrees to the left. I looked through my glasses and so did he, and as I could see nothing I switched on the big searchlight. Then there came a call from the Look Out near us, the dark patch changed to thick smoke, and out of the haze into the blaze of my searchlight slid the high forepeak of a destroyer. I thought it was one of our escort, and so did the Officer of the Watch; but as we watched the destroyer swung round, and we could see the whole length of her. I can't explain how one can instantly distinguish enemy ships from one's own, and can even class them and name them at sight. One knows them by the lines and silhouette just as one knows a Ford car from a Rolls-Royce. The destroyer was an enemy, plain even to me. She had blundered into us by mistake and was now trying hard to get away. I don't know what the Officer of the Watch did—I never gave him a thought—my mind simply froze on

to that beautiful battery of 6-inch guns down below and on to that enemy destroyer trying to escape. Those two things, the battery and the enemy, filled my whole world.

"Within five seconds I had called the battery, given them a range of 2,000 yards, swung the guns on to the enemy and loosed three shells—the first shells which I had seen fired in any action. They all went over for I had not allowed for our height above the water. Then the Boche did an extraordinary thing. If he had gone on swinging round and dashed away, he might have reached cover in the haze before I could hit him. But his Officer of the Watch was either frightened out of his wits or else was a bloomin' copper-bottomed 'ero. Instead of trying to get away, he swung back towards us, rang up full speed, and came charging in upon us so as to get home with a torpedo. It was either the maddest or the bravest thing which I shall ever see in my life. I ought to have been frightfully thrilled, but somehow I wasn't. I felt no excitement whatever; you see, I was thinking all the time of directing my guns and had no consciousness of anything else in the world. The moment the destroyer charged, zig-zagging to distract our aim, I knew exactly what to do with him. I instantly shortened the range by 400 yards, and gave my gunners rapid independent fire from the whole battery. The idea was to put up a curtain of continuous fire about 200 yards short for him to run into, and to draw in the curtain as he came nearer. As he zig-zagged, so we followed, keeping up that wide deadly curtain slap in his path. There was no slouching about those beautiful long-service

gun-layers of ours, and you should have seen the darlings pump it out. I have seen fast firing in practice but never anything like that. There was one continuous stream of shell as the six guns took up the order. Six-inch guns are no toys, and 100-lb. shells are a bit hefty to handle, yet no quick-firing cartridge loaders could have been worked faster than were my heavy beauties. Every ten seconds my battery spat out six great shells, and I steadily drew the curtain in, keeping it always dead in his path, but by some miracle of light or of manœuvring the enemy escaped destruction for a whole long minute. On came the destroyer and round came our ship facing her. The Officer of the Watch was swinging our bows towards the enemy so as to lessen the mark for his torpedo, and I swung my guns the opposite way as the ship turned, keeping them always on the charging destroyer. Away towards the enemy the sea boiled as the torrent of shells hit it and ricochetted for miles.

"At last the end came! It seemed to have been hours since I began to fire, but it couldn't really have been more than a minute; for even German destroyers will cover half a mile in that time. The range was down to 1,000 yards when he loosed a torpedo, and at that very precise instant a shell, ricochetting upwards, caught him close to the water line of his high forepeak and burst in his vitals. I saw instantly a great flash blaze up from his funnels as the high explosive smashed his engines, boilers and fires into scrap. He reared up and screamed exactly like a wounded horse. It sounded rather awful, though it was only the shriek of steam from the burst pipes; it

made one feel how very live a thing is a ship, how in its splendid vitality it is, as Kipling says, more than the crew. He reared up and fell away to port, and two more of my shells hit him almost amidships and tore out his bottom plates like shredded paper. I could hear the rending crash of the explosions through my ear-protectors, and through the continuous roar of my own curtain fire. He rolled right over and was gone! He vanished so quickly that for a moment my shells flew screaming over the empty sea, and then I stopped the gunners. My battle had lasted for one minute and forty seconds!

"'But what about the torpedo?' you will ask. I never saw it, but the Officer of the Watch told me that it had passed harmlessly more than a hundred feet away from us. 'You sank the destroyer,' said the Officer of the Watch, grinning, 'but my masterly navigation saved the ship. So honours is easy, Mr. Marine. If I had had those guns of yours,' he went on, 'I would have sunk the beggar with about half that noise and half that expenditure of Government ammunition. I never saw such a wasteful performance,' said he. But he was only pulling my leg. All the senior officers, from the Owner downwards, were very nice to me and said that for a youngster, and a Soldier at that, I hadn't managed the affair at all badly.

"I thought that the guns' crews had done fine and told them so; but the chief gunner—a stern Marine from Eastney—shook his head sadly. No. 3 gun had been trained five seconds late, he said, and was behind the others all through. He seemed to reckon the sinking of the destroyer as nothing in condonation of the shame No. 3 had

brought upon his battery. I condoled with him, but he was wounded to the heart.

. . . . .

"The officer of the Watch said that all the time the destroyer was charging she was firing small stuff at our platform with a Q.-F. gun on her forepeak. And I knew nothing about it! This is the simple and easy way in which one earns a reputation for coolness under heavy fire."

CHAPTER V

WITH THE GRAND FLEET: THE TERRIERS AND THE RATS

"You missed a lot, Soldier," said the Sub-Lieutenant to his friend the Marine Subaltern, "through not being here at the beginning. Now it is altogether too comfortable for us of the big ships; the destroyers and patrols get all the fun while we hang about here in harbour or put up a stately and entirely innocuous parade of the North Sea. No doubt we are Grand in our Silent Might and Keep our Unsleeping Vigil and all the rest of the pretty tosh which one reads in the papers—but in reality we eat too much for the good of our waists and do too little work for our princely pay. But it was very different at the beginning. Then we were like a herd of wild buffaloes harassed day and night by super-mosquitoes. When we were not on watch we were saying our prayers. It was a devil of a time, my son."

"I thought that you Commanded the Seas," observed the marine, an innocent youth who had lately joined.

The Sub-Lieutenant, dark and short, with twenty years to his age and the salt wisdom of five naval generations in his rich red blood, grinned capaciously, "So the dear simple old British Public

thought. So their papers told them every day. We did not often get a sight of newspapers—there were no regular mails, as now, and none of the comforts of an ordered civilised life, as some ass wrote the other day of the Grand Fleet. What the deuce have we to do with an ordered civilised life! Fighting's our job, and that's what we want, not beastly comforts. While we were being chivied about by Fritz's submarines it was jolly to be told that we Commanded the Seas of the World. But to me it sounded a bit sarcastic at a time when we had not got the length of commanding even the entrances to our own harbours. That's the cold truth. For six months we hadn't a submarine proof harbour in England or Scotland or Ireland though we looked for one pretty diligently. We wandered about, east and west and north, looking for some hole where the submarines couldn't get in without first knocking at the door, and where we could lie in peace for two days together. Wherever we went it was the same old programme. The Zepps would smell us out and Fritz would come nosing around with his submarines, and we had to up anchor and be off on our travels once more. At sea we were all right. We cruised always at speed, with a destroyer patrol out on either side, so that Fritz had no chance to get near enough to try a shot with the torpedo. A fast moving ship can't be hit except broadside on and within a range of about 400 yards; and as we always moved twice as fast as a submerged U boat he never could get within sure range. He tried once or twice till the destroyers and light cruisers began to get him with the ram and the gun. Fritz must have had a

good many thrilling minutes when he was fiddling with his rudder, his diving planes and his torpedo discharge gear and saw a destroyer foaming down upon him at over thirty knots. Fritz died a clean death in those days. I would fifty times sooner go under to the ram or the gun than be caught like a rat in some of the dainty traps we've been setting for a year past. We are top dog now, but I blush to think of those first few months. It was a most humiliating spectacle. Fancy fifty million pounds worth of the greatest fighting ships in the world scuttling about in fear of a dozen or two of footy little submarines any one of which we could have run up on the main derrick as easily as a picket boat. If I, a mere snotty in the old *Olympus*, felt sore in my bones what must the Owners and the Admirals have felt? Answer me that, Pongo?"

"It's all right now, I suppose," said the Pongo.

"Safe and dull," replied he, "powerful dull. No chance of a battle, and no feeling that any day a mouldy in one's ribs is more likely than not. If Fritz had had as much skill as he had pluck he would have blown up half the Grand Fleet. Why he didn't I can't imagine, except that it takes a hundred years to make a sailor. Our submarine officers, with such a target, would have downed a battleship a week easy."

"Fritz got the three Cressys."

"He simply couldn't help," sniffed the Sub-Lieutenant. "They asked for trouble; one after the other. Fritz struck a soft patch that morning which he is never likely to find again."

"Had the harbours no booms?"

"Never a one. We had built the ships all right,

but we had forgotten the harbours. There wasn't one, I say, in the east or north or west which Fritz could not enter whenever he chose to take the risk. He could come in submerged, a hundred feet down, diving under the line of patrols, but luckily for us he couldn't do much after he arrived except keep us busy. For as sure as ever he stuck up a periscope to take a sight we were on to him within five seconds with the small stuff, and then there was a chase which did one's heart good. I've seen a dozen, all much alike, though one had a queer ending which I will tell you. It explains a lot, too. It shows exactly why Fritz fails when he has to depend upon individual nerve and judgment. He is deadly in a crowd, but pretty feeble when left to himself. We used to think that the Germans were a stolid race but they aren't. They have nerves like red-hot wires. I have seen a crew come up out of a captured submarine, trembling and shivering and crying. I suppose that frightfulness gets over them like drink or drugs or assorted debauchery. Now for my story. One evening towards sunset in the first winter—which means six bells (about three o'clock in the afternoon) up here—a German submarine crept into this very harbour and the first we knew of it was a bit alarming. The commander was a good man, and if he had only kept his head, after working his way in submerged, he might have got one, if not two, big ships. But instead of creeping up close to the battleships, where they lay anchored near the shore, he stuck up a periscope a 1,000 yards away and blazed a torpedo into the brown of them. It was a forlorn, silly shot. They were end on to him, and the

torpedo just ran between two of them and smashed up against the steep shore behind. The track of it on the sea was wide and white as a high road, and half a dozen destroyers were on to that submarine even before the shot had exploded against the rocks. Fritz got down safely—he was clever, but too darned nervous for under-water work—and then began a hunt which was exactly like one has seen in a barn when terriers are after rats. The destroyers and motor patrols were everywhere, and above them flew the seaplanes with observers who could peer down through a hundred feet of water. In a shallow harbour Fritz could have sunk to the bottom and lain there till after dark, but we have 200 fathoms here with a very steep shore and there was no bottom for him. A submarine can't stand the water pressure of more than 200 feet at the outside. He didn't dare to fill his tanks and sink, and could only keep down in diving trim so long as he kept moving with his electric motors and held himself submerged with his horizontal planes. Had the motors stopped, the submarine would have come up, for in diving trim it was slightly lighter than the water displaced. All we had to do was to keep on hunting till his electric batteries had run down, and then he would be obliged to come up. Do you twig, Pongo?"

"But he could have sunk to the bottom if he had chosen?"

"Oh, yes. But then he could never have risen again. To have filled his tanks would have meant almost instant death. At 200 fathoms his plates would have crumpled like paper."

"Still I think that I should have done it."

"So should I. But Fritz didn't. He roamed about the harbour, blind, keeping as deep down as he could safely go. Above him scoured the patrol boats and destroyers, and above them again flew the seaplanes. Now and then the air observers would get a sight of him and once or twice they dropped bombs, but this was soon stopped as the risk to our own boats was too great. Regarded as artillery practice bomb dropping from aeroplanes is simply rotten. One can't possibly aim from a thing moving at fifty miles an hour. If one may believe the look outs of the destroyers the whole harbour crawled with periscopes, but they were really bully beef cans and other rubbish chucked over from the warships. When last seen, or believed to be seen, Fritz was blundering towards the line of battleships lying under the deep gloom of the shore, and then he vanished altogether. Night came on, the very long Northern night in winter, and it seemed extra specially long to us in the big ships. Searchlights were going all through the dark hours, the water gleamed, all the floating rubbish which accumulates so fast in harbour stood out dead black against the silvery surface, and the Officers of the Watch detected more periscopes than Fritz had in his whole service. The hunt went on without ceasing for, at any moment, Fritz's batteries might peter out, and he come up. It was a bit squirmy to feel that here cooped up in a narrow deep sea lock were over a hundred King's ships, and that somewhere below us was a desperate German submarine which couldn't possibly escape, but which might blow some of us to blazes any minute."

"Did any of you go to sleep?" asked the Pongo foolishly.

The Sub-Lieutenant stared. "When it wasn't my watch I turned in as usual," he replied. "Why not?

"In the morning there was no sign of Fritz, so we concluded that he had either sunk himself to the bottom or had somehow managed to get out of the harbour. In either case we should not see him more. So we just forgot him as we had forgotten others who had been chased and had escaped. But he turned up again after all. For twenty-four hours nothing much happened except the regular routine, though after the scare we were all very wide awake for more U boats, and then we had orders to proceed to sea. I was senior snotty of the *Olympus*, and I was on the after look-out platform as the ship cast loose from her moorings and moved away, to take her place in the line. As we got going there was a curious grating noise all along the bottom just as if we had been lightly aground; everyone was puzzled to account for it as there were heaps of water under us. The grating went on till we were clear of our berth, and then in the midst of the wide foaming wake rolled up the long thin hull of a submarine. A destroyer dashed up, and the forward gun was in the act of firing when a loud voice from her bridge called on the gunners to stop. 'Don't fire on a coffin,' roared her commander. It was the German submarine, which after some thirty hours under water had become a dead hulk. All the air had long since been used up and the crew were lying at their posts—cold meat, poor devils. A beastly way to die."

"Beastly," murmured the Marine. "War is a foul game."

"Still," went on the Sub-Lieutenant, cheerfully, "a dead Fritz is always much more wholesome than a live one, and here were a score of him safely dead."

"But what had happened to the submarine?" asked the Marine, not being a sailor.

"Don't you see?" explained the Sub-Lieutenant. who had held his story to be artistically finished, "What a Pongo it is! Fritz had wandered about blind, deep down under water, until his batteries had given out. Then the submarine rose, fouled our bottom by the merest accident, and stuck there jammed against our bilge keels till the movement of the ship had thrown it clear. It swung to the tide with us. The chances against the submarine rising under one of the battleships were thousands to one, but chances like that have a way of coming off at sea. Nothing at sea ever causes surprise, my son."

The Sub-Lieutenant spoke with the assurance of a grey-haired Admiral; he was barely twenty years old, but he was wise with the profound salt wisdom of the sea and will never get any older or less wise though he lives to be ninety.

. . . . .

Though our friend the young Lieutenant of Marines was no sailor he was a scholar, trained in the class-rooms and playing fields, of a great English school. He was profoundly impressed, as all outsiders must be, by the engrained efficiency of the seafolk among whom he now dwelt, their easy mastery of the technicalities of sea craft, and

their almost childish ignorance of everything that lay outside it. It was borne in upon him that they were a race apart, bred to their special work as terriers and racehorses are bred, the perfect product of numberless generations of sea fighters. It was borne in upon him, too, that no nation coming late to the sea, like the Germans, could, though taking an infinity of thought, possibly stand up against us. Sea power does not consist of ships but of men. For a real Navy does not so much design and build ships as secrete them. They are the expression in machinery of its brains and Soul. He arrived at this conclusion after much patient thought and then diffidently laid it before his experienced friend. The Sub-Lieutenant accepted the theory at once as beyond argument.

"That's the whole secret, my son, the secret of the Navy. Fritz can't design ships; he can only copy ours, and then he can't make much of his copies. Take his submarine work. He has any amount of pluck, though he is a dirty swine; he doesn't fail for want of pluck but because he hasn't the right kind of nerve. That is where Fritz fails and where our boys succeed, because they were bred to the sea and their fathers before them, and their fathers before that. Submarining as a sport is exactly like stalking elephants on foot in long grass. One has to wriggle on one's belly till one gets within close range, and then make sure of a kill in one shot. There's no time for a second if one misses. Fritz will get fairly close up, sometimes—or did before we had taken his measure—but not that close enough to make dead sure of a hit. He is too much afraid of being seen when he pops his periscope above water. So

he comes down between two stools. He is too far off for a certain hit and not far enough to escape being seen. That story I told you the other day was an exact illustration. The moment he pops up the destroyers swoop down upon him, he flinches, looses off a mouldy, somehow, anyhow, and then gets down. That sort of thing is no bally use; one doesn't sink battleships that fool way. Our men first make sure of their hit at the closest range, and then think about getting down —or don't get down. They do their work without worrying about being sunk themselves the instant after. That's just the difference between us and the Germans, between terriers and rats. It's no good taking partial risks in submarine work; one must go the whole hog or leave it alone.

"Risks are queer things," went on the Sub-Lieutenant, reflectively. "The bigger they are, the less one gets hurt. Just look at the seaplanes. One would think that the ordinary dangers of flight were bad enough—the failure of a stay, the misfiring of an engine, a bad gusty wind—and so we thought before the war. It looked the forlornest of hopes to rush upon an enemy plane, shoot him down at the shortest of range, or ram him if one couldn't get a kill any other way. It seemed that if two planes stood up to one another, both must certainly be lost. And so they would. Yet time and again our Flight officers have charged the German planes, seen them run away or drop into the sea, and come off themselves with no more damage than a hole or two through the wings. It's just nerve, nerve and breeding. When we dash in upon Fritz with submarine or seaplanes, taking no count of the risks, but seeking only to

kill, he almost always either blunders or runs. It isn't that he lacks pluck—don't believe that silly libel; Fritz is as brave as men are made—but he hasn't the sporting nerve. He will take risks in the mass, but he doesn't like them single; we do. He doesn't love big game shooting, on foot, alone; we do. He does his best; he obeys orders up to any limit; he will fight and die without shrinking. But he is not a natural fighting man, and he is always thinking of dying. We love fighting, love it so much that we don't give a thought to the dying part. We just look upon the risk as that which gives spice to the game."

"I believe," said the Marine, thoughtfully, "that you have exactly described the difference between the races. With us fighting and dying are parts of one great glorious game; with Fritz they are the most solemn of business. We laugh all the time and sing music-hall songs; Fritz never smiles and sings the Wacht am Rhein. I am beginning to realize that our irrepressible levity is a mighty potent force, mightier by far than Fritz's solemnity. The true English spirit is to be seen at its best and brightest in the Navy, and the Navy is always ready for the wildest of schoolboy rags. If I had not come to sea I might myself have become a solemn blighter like Fritz."

. . . . .

In the wardroom that evening the Marine repeated the Sub-Lieutenant's story and was assured that it was true. The Navy will pull a Soldier's leg with a joyous disregard for veracity, but there is a crudity about its invention which soon ceases to deceive. They can invent nothing which

approaches in wonder the marvels which happen every day.

The talk then fell upon the ever-engrossing topic of submarine catching, and experiences flowed forth in a stream which filled the Marine with astonishment and admiration. He had never served an apprenticeship in a submarine catcher and the sea business in small sporting craft was altogether new to him.

"It is a pity," at last said a regular Navy Lieutenant, "that submarines are no good against other submarines. That is a weakness which we must seek to overcome if, as seems likely in the future, navies contain more under-water boats than any other craft."

"That is not quite true," spoke up a grizzled Royal Naval Reserve man, and told a story of submarine *v.* submarine which I am not permitted to repeat.

"Yes," said the Commander of the *Utopia* (The Pongo's ship). "Very clever and very ingenious. But did you ever hear how the Navy, not the merchant service this time, caught a submarine off the ——— Lightship. That was finesse, if you please, Mr. Royal Naval Reserve."

Our young marine hugged himself. He had set the Navy talking, and when the Navy talks there come forth things which make glad the ears.

"You know the ——— Lightship," went on the Commander, a sea potentate of thirty-five, with a passion for music-hall songs which he sang most divinely. "She is anchored on a shoal which lies off the entrance to one of the busiest of our English harbours. Though her big lantern is

not lighted in war time the ship remains as a day mark, and two men are always on board of her. She is anchored on the top of a sandbank where at low water there are not more than twelve feet, though close by the channels deepen to thirty feet. A little while ago the men in the Lightship were interested to observe a German submarine approach at high water—of course submerged—and to take up a position about a hundred yards distant where the low-water soundings were twenty-two feet. There she remained on the bottom from tide to tide, watching through her periscope all the shipping which passed in and out of the harbour. Her draught in cruising trim was about fourteen feet, so that at high water she was completely submerged except for the periscope and at low water the top of her conning tower showed above the surface. At high tide she slipped away with the results of her observations. The incident was reported at once to the naval authorities and the lightship men were instructed to report again at once if the submarine's performance was repeated. A couple of days later, under the same conditions, Fritz in his submarine came back and the whole programme of watchfully waiting was gone through again. He evidently knew the soundings to a hair and lay where no destroyer could quickly get at him through the difficult winding channels amid the sandbanks except when the tide was nearly at the full. Even at dead low water he could, if surprised, rise and float and rapidly make off to where there was depth enough to dive. He couldn't be rushed, and there were three or four avenues of escape. Fritz had discovered a safe post of

observation and seemed determined to make the most of it. But, Mr. Royal Naval Reserve, even the poor effete old Navy has brains and occasionally uses them. The night after the second visit an Admiralty tug came along, hauled up the lightship's anchors, and shifted her exactly one hundred yards east-north-east. You will note that the German submarine's chosen spot was exactly one hundred yards west-south-west of the lightship's old position. The change was so slight that it might be expected to escape notice. And so it did. Three days passed, and then at high tide the U boat came cheerfully along upon its mission and lay off the lightship exactly as before. The only difference was that now she was upon the top of the shoal with barely twelve feet under her at low water instead of twenty-two feet. The observers in the lightship winked at one another, for they had talked with the officer of the Admiralty tug and were wise to the game. The tide fell, the submarine lay peacefully on the bottom, and Fritz, intent to watch the movements of ships in and out of the harbour, did not notice that the water was steadily falling away from his sides and leaving his whole conning tower and deck exposed. Far away a destroyer was watching, and at the correct moment, when the water around the U boat was too shallow to float her even in the lightest trim, she slipped up as near as she could approach, trained a 4-inch gun upon Fritz and sent in an armed boat's crew to wish him good-day. Poor old Fritz knew nothing of his visitors until they were hammering violently upon his fore hatch and calling upon him to come out and surrender. He was a very sick man and did not understand at all how he had been caught until

the whole manœuvre had been kindly explained to him by the Lieutenant-Commander of the destroyer, from whom I also received the story. 'You see, Fritz, old son,' observed the Lieutenant-Commander, 'Admiralty charts are jolly things and you know all about them, but you should sometimes check them with the lead. Things change, Fritz; light-ships can be moved. Come and have a drink, old friend, you look as if you needed something stiff.' Fritz gulped down a tall whisky and soda, gasped, and gurgled out, 'That was damned clever and I was a damned fool. For God's sake don't tell them in Germany how I was caught.' 'Not for worlds, old man,' replied the Lieutenant-Commander. 'We will say that you were nabbed while trying to ditch a hospital ship. There is glory for you.'"

"A very nice story," observed the Royal Naval Reserve man drily.

"I believed your yarn," said the Commander reproachfully, "and mine is every bit as true as yours. But no matter. Call up the band and let us get to real business."

Two minutes later the ante-room had emptied, and these astonishing naval children were out on the half-deck dancing wildly but magnificently. Commanders and Lieutenants were mixed up with Subs., clerks and snotties from the gun room. Rank disappeared and nothing counted but the execution of the most complicated Russian measures. It was a strange scene which perhaps helps to reveal that combination of professional efficiency and childish irresponsibility which makes the Naval Service unlike any other community of men and boys in the world.

CHAPTER VI

THE MEDITERRANEAN: A FAILURE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

WAR is made up of successes and failures. We English do not forget our successes, but we have an incorrigible habit of wiping from our minds the recollection of our failures. Which is a very bad habit, for as every man realises, during his half-blind stumbles through life, failure is a most necessary schoolmistress. Yet, though civilians seem able to bring themselves to forget that in war we ever fail of success, soldiers and sailors do not forget, and are always seeking to make of their admitted mistakes, stepping stones upon which they may rise to ultimate victory. On land one may retrieve errors more readily than at sea, for movements are much slower and evil results declare themselves less rapidly. I am now compelled to write of a failure at sea very early in the war, which was not retrieved, and which had a trail of most disastrous consequence; and I hope to do it without imputing blame to anyone, no blame, that is, except for the lack of imaginative vision, which is one of our most conspicuous defects as a race.

All of those who read me know that the blows which we have struck in France and Flanders, ever since the crowning victory of the Marne—that

still unexplained miracle which saved western civilisation from ruin—are the direct consequence of the success in the North Sea of our mobilised fleets in August, 1914. But few know—or if they do, have pushed the knowledge testily from their minds—of a failure in the Mediterranean, also in August of 1914, a failure which at the time may have seemed of little account, yet out of which grew in inevitable melancholy sequence, a tragical train of troubles. Though we may choose to forget, Fate has a memory most damnably long. Nothing would be more unfair than to lay at the door of the Navy the blame for all the consequences of a failure which, it has been officially held, the officers on the spot did their utmost to avert. Men are only human after all, and the sea is a very big place. We need not censure anyone. Still, we should be most foolish and blind to the lessons of war if we did not now and then turn aside from the smug contemplation of our strategical and tactical victories, and seek in a humble spirit to gather instruction from a grievous pondering over the consequences of our defeats. And of this particular defeat of which I write the results have been gloomy beyond description—the sword in the balance which threw Turkey and Bulgaria into alliance with our enemies, and all the blood and the tears with which the soil of the Near East has been soaked.

When war broke out all our modern battleships were in the North Sea, but of our nine fast battle cruisers four were away. The *Australia* was at the other side of the world, and the *Inflexible* (flag), *Indomitable* and *Indefatigable* were in the Mediterranean. We also had four armoured

cruisers, and four light cruisers in the Mediterranean —the armoured *Defence, Duke of Edinburgh, Warrior* and *Black Prince*, the light fast *Gloucester* of the new "Town" class, a sister of the *Glasgow* and the *Bristol*, and three other similar cruisers. The Germans had in the Mediterranean the battle cruiser *Goeben*, as fast, though not so powerfully gunned, as the three Inflexibles of ours. She carried ten 11-inch guns, while our battle cruisers were each armed with eight 12-inch guns. The *Goeben* had as her consort the light cruiser *Breslau*, one of the German Town class built in 1912, a newer and faster edition of the earlier Town cruisers which were under von Spee in the Pacific and Atlantic. She could have put up a good fight though probably an unsuccessful one against the *Gloucester*, but was no match for the *Defence*, the *Warrior*, the *Black Prince* or *Duke of Edinburgh*. Our squadrons in the Mediterranean were, therefore, in fighting value fully three times as powerful as the German vessels. Our job was to catch them and to destroy them, but unfortunately we did not succeed in bringing them to action. The story of their evasion of us, and of what their escape involved is, to my mind, one of the most fascinating stories of the whole war.

War officially began between France and Germany upon August 3rd at 6.45 p.m. when the German Ambassador in Paris asked for his passports, and between Great Britain and Germany upon August 4th at 11 p.m., when our ultimatum in regard to Belgium was definitely rejected. But though then at war with Germany, England did not declare war on Austria until midnight of August 12th. A queer situation arose in the

Mediterranean as the result of these gaps between the dates of active hostilities. Upon August 4th, the German cruisers could and did attack French territory without being attacked by us, and all through those fateful days of August 5th and 6th, when our three battle cruisers were hovering between Messina and the Adriatic and our four armoured cruisers were lying a little to the south off Syracuse, Italy was neutral, and Austria was not at war with us. Our naval commanders were in the highest degree anxious to do nothing which could in any way offend Italy—whose position as still a member of the Triple Alliance with Austria and Germany was delicate in the extreme—and were also anxious to commit no act of hostility towards Austria. Upon August 4th, therefore, their hands were tied tight; upon the 5th and 6th they were untied as against the German cruisers, but could not stretch into either Italian or Austrian waters. The German Admiral took full advantage of the freedom of movement allowed to him by our diplomatic bonds.

Let us now come to the story of the escape of the two German cruisers, indicate as clearly as may be how it occurred, and suggest how the worst consequences of that escape might have been retrieved by instant and spirited action on the part of our Government at home. Naval responsibility, as distinct from political responsibility, ended with the escape of the *Goeben* and *Breslau* and their entry into the Dardanelles on the way up to Constantinople which then, and for nearly three months afterwards, was nominally a neutral port.

On July 31st, 1914, the *Goeben*, a battle cruiser

armed with ten 11-inch guns, and with a full speed of twenty-eight to twenty-nine knots, was at Brindisi in the territorial waters of Italy, a country which was then regarded by the Germans as an ally. She was joined there on August 1st by the *Breslau*, a light cruiser of some three knots less speed than the *Goeben* and armed only with twelve 4.1-inch guns. The German commanders had been warned of the imminence of hostilities with France—and, indeed, upon that day French territory had been violated by German covering troops, though war had not yet been declared. The French Fleet was far away to the west, already busied with the transport of troops from Algeria and Morocco to Marseilles. Based upon Malta and in touch with the French was the British heavy squadron of three battle cruisers. The *Indefatigable*, a heavier and faster vessel than either of the sisters *Inflexible* or *Indomitable*, was certainly a match for the *Goeben* by herself; the three battle cruisers combined were of overpowering strength. Accompanying the battle cruisers was the armoured cruiser squadron—*Black Prince*, *Duke of Edinburgh*, *Warrior* and *Defence*—together with the light cruiser *Gloucester*. The other light cruisers and the destroyer escort do not come directly into my picture. The *Gloucester*—which, as she showed later, had the heels of the *Breslau* though not of the speedy *Goeben*—was despatched at once to the Adriatic to keep watch upon the movements of the Germans. So long as the Germans were in the Adriatic, the English Admiral, Sir Berkeley Milne, could do nothing to prevent their junction with the Austrians at Pola, but upon August 2nd, they both came

THE MEDITERRANEAN OPERATIONS.

out and went to Messina, and so uncovered the Straits of Otranto, which gave passage between Messina and the Adriatic. The English battle cruisers then steamed to the south and east of Sicily, bound for the Otranto Straits. Rear-Admiral Troubridge, in command of the English armoured cruisers, remained behind.

Upon August 1st, the Italian Government had declared its intention to be neutral, and upon the 3rd the Italian authorities at Messina refused coal to the German ships, very much to the outspoken disgust and disappointment of the German Admiral who had reckoned Italy as at least passively benevolent. But being a man of resource, he filled his bunkers from those of German vessels in the harbour, and early in the morning of August 4th—having received news the previous evening that war had broken out with France, and was imminent with England—dashed at the Algerian coast and bombarded Philippeville and Bona, whence troops had been arranged to sail for France. When one reflects upon the position of Admiral Souchon, within easy striking distance of three English battle cruisers, which at any moment might have been transformed by wireless orders into enemies of overwhelming power, this dash upon Phillippeville and Bona was an exploit which would merit an honourable mention upon any navy's records. Souchon did, in the time available to him, all the damage that he could to his enemy's arrangements, and then sped back to Messina, passing on the way the *Inflexible* (flag), *Indomitable*, and *Gloucester*, which had thus got into close touch with the Germans, though they were not yet free to go for them. The enterprising

Souchon had cut his time rather fine, and come near the edge of destruction; for though at the moment of passing the *Inflexible* and *Indomitable* England was still at peace with Germany, war was declared before he reached the neutral refuge of Messina on August 5th. Milne's hands were thus tied at the critical moment when he had both the elusive German cruisers under the muzzles of his hungry guns.

At Messina the *Goeben* and *Breslau* were again refused coal, and were ordered to be clear of the port within twenty-four hours. Italy was resolutely neutral; it was a severe blow. Upon the night of August 4th–5th had come another blow —a wireless message, picked up at sea, that England had declared war. The position of the Germans now appeared to be desperate, more so to them than even to us, for Admiral Souchon had already been warned by the Austrians not to attempt the passage of the Straits of Otranto, and had also received direct orders at Messina from Berlin to make a break eastwards for Constantinople. His prospects of eluding our Squadrons and of reaching the Dardanelles must have seemed to him of the smallest. It is of interest to note, as revealing the hardy quality of Admiral Souchon, that these orders from Berlin reached him at midnight upon August 3rd before he made his raid upon Phillippeville and Bona. He might have steamed off at once towards the east in comparative security, for England was not yet at war and our battle cruisers were not yet waiting upon his doorstep. But instead of seeking safety in flight he struck a shrewd blow for his country and set back the hour of his departure for the east by three whole

days. He sent off a wireless message to Greece asking that coal might be got ready for his ships near an inconspicuous island in the Ægean. Admiral Souchon may personally be a frightful Hun—I don't know, I have never met him—but, I confess that, as a sailor, he appeals to me very strongly. In resource, in cool decision, and in dashing leadership he was the unquestioned superior of the English Admirals, whose job it was to get the better of him.

Upon August 6th, a day big with fate for us and for South Eastern Europe, the *Goeben* and *Breslau* were at Messina with steam up. They had again obtained coal from compatriot ships and could snap their fingers at Italian neutrality. Watching them was the light cruiser *Gloucester*, which was no match at all for the *Goeben*, and strung out to the north-east, guarding the passage from Messina to the Adriatic, were the three English battle cruisers *Inflexible*, *Indomitable* and *Indefatigable*. The English armoured cruisers, *Black Prince*, *Duke of Edinburgh*, *Defence* and *Warrior*, were cruising to the South of Syracuse. It is not contended that these four vessels could not have been off Messina, and could not have met and fought Souchon, when at last he issued forth. The contention is—and since it has been accepted by the Admiralty as sound, one is compelled humbly to say little—that none of these cruisers was sufficiently armed or armoured to risk action with a battle cruiser of the *Goeben's* class. It is urged that if Milne had ordered the armoured cruiser squadron to fight the *Goeben*, their Admiral, Troubridge, might have anticipated the fate of Cradock three months later at Coronel. Not one

of them had a speed approaching that of the *Goeben*, and their twenty-two heavy guns were of 9.2-inch calibre as opposed to the ten 11-inch guns of the Germans. That they would have suffered serious loss is beyond doubt; but might they not, while dying, have damaged and delayed the *Goeben* for a sufficient time to allow the two *Inflexibles* and the *Indefatigable* to come down and gobble her up? It is not for a layman to offer any opinion upon these high naval matters. But ever since the action was not fought, and the *Goeben* and *Breslau* escaped, whenever two or three naval officers are gathered together and the subject is discussed, the vote is always thrown upon the side of fighting. The Soul of the Navy revolts at the thought that its business is to play for safety when great risks boldly faced may yield great fruits of victory.

The dispositions of the English Admiral were designed to meet one contingency only—an attempt by the Germans to pass the Straits of Otranto and to join the Austrians; he had evidently no suspicion that they had been ordered to Constantinople and took no steps to bar their way to the east. The handling of his two ships by Admiral Souchon was masterly. Until the latest minute he masked his intentions and completely outmanœuvred his powerful English opponents. Issuing from Messina on the afternoon of August 6th, he made towards the north-east as if about to hazard the passage to the Adriatic, and the small *Gloucester*, which most gallantly kept touch with far superior forces —she was some two knots slower than the *Goeben*, though rather faster than the *Breslau*—fell back before him and called up the battle cruisers on

her wireless. Souchon did not attempt to interfere with the *Gloucester,* for she was doing exactly what he desired of her. He kept upon his course to the north-east until darkness came down, and then swinging suddenly eight points to starboard, pointed straight for Cape Matapan far off to the south-east and called for full speed. Then and then only he gave the order to jam the *Gloucester's* wireless.

He did not wholly succeed, the *Gloucester's* warning of his change of route got through to the battle cruisers, but they were too far away to interpose their bulky veto on the German plans. For two hours the German ships travelled at full speed, the *Goeben* leading, and behind them trailed the gallant *Gloucester,* though she had nothing bigger in her armoury than two 6-inch guns, and could have been sunk by a single shell from the *Goeben's* batteries. Twice she overhauled the *Breslau* and fired upon her, and twice the *Goeben* had to fall back to the aid of her consort and drive away the persistent English captain. The gallantry of the *Gloucester* alone redeems the event from being a bitter English humiliation. All the while she was vainly pursuing the German vessels the *Gloucester* continued her calls for help. They got through, but the *Goeben* and *Breslau* had seized too long a start. They were clear away for the Dardanelles and Constantinople, and were safe from effective pursuit.

Vice-Admiral Souchon knew his Greeks and his Turks better than we did. He coaled his ships at the small island of Denusa in the Cyclades with the direct connivance of King Constantine, who had arranged for coal to be sent over from Syra, and ignored a formal message from the Sublime

Porte forbidding him to pass the Dardanelles. He was confident that the Turks, still anxious to sit upon the fence until the safer side were disclosed, would not dare to fire upon him, and he was justified in his confidence. He steamed through the Narrows unmolested and anchored before Constantinople. There a telegram was handed to him from the Kaiser: "His Majesty sends you his acknowledgments." One must allow that the Imperial congratulations were worthily bestowed. Souchon had done for Germany a greater service than had any of her generals or admirals or diplomats; he had definitely committed Turkey to the side of the Central Powers.

. . . . .

> If of all words of tongue and pen
> The saddest are "It might have been,"
> More sad are these we daily see,
> "It is, but hadn't ought to be."
>
> —*Bret Harte.*

For the escape of the *Goeben* and *Breslau*, the Royal Navy was responsible, but for the consequences which grew out of that escape the responsibility rests upon *La haute Politique* at home. The naval failure might have been retrieved within forty-eight hours had our Foreign Office understood the hesitating Turkish mind, and had realised that Souchon's breach of the Dardanelles Convention—which bars the Straits to foreign warships—had brought to us a Heaven-sent opportunity to cut the bonds of gold and intrigue which bound the Turkish Government to that of Germany. Every Englishman in Constantinople expected that a pursuing English squadron of overwhelming power would immediately appear off the Turkish

capital and insist upon the surrender or destruction of the German trespassers. Just as Souchon had passed the Dardanelles unmolested, so Milne with his three battle cruisers—had orders been sent to him—might have passed them on the day following. The Turks own no argument but force, and the greater force would have appeared to them to be the better argument. Milne, had he been permitted by the British Foreign Office, could have followed the *Goeben* and *Breslau* to Constantinople and sunk them there before the eyes of the world. Had he done so, the history of the war would have been very different. Upon the Cabinet at home must rest the eternal responsibility for not seeing and not seizing the finest and least hazardous opportunity that has been offered to us of determining by one bold stroke the course of the war. The three English battle cruisers could not have seized Constantinople any more effectively than the English Squadron, without military co-operation, could have seized it seven months later had it succeeded in forcing with its guns the passage of the Narrows. But they could have revealed to the vacillating Turks, as in a lightning flash, that the Allies had the wit to see, and the boldness to grasp the vital opportunities offered by war. But our Government had neither the wit nor the courage, the wonderful chance was allowed to slip by unused, and the costliest failure of the war was consummated in all its tragic fullness.

All through August and September and right up to the moment when, late in October, Turkey was forced into the war by German pressure, our Foreign Office hugged the belief—God alone knows how acquired—that diplomatic pressure at Con-

stantinople could counteract the display of successful force embodied in the frowning guns of the *Goeben* and the *Breslau*. In the eyes of a non-maritime people two modern warships within easy gunshot of their chief city are of more pressing consequence than the Grand Fleet far away. Our Government accepted gladly the preposterous story that these German ships had been purchased by the Turks—with German money—and had been taken over by Turkish officers and crews. It is pitiful to read now the official statement isssued on August 15th, 1914, through the newly formed Press Bureau: "The Press Bureau states that there is no reason to doubt that the Turkish Government is about to replace the German officers and crews of the *Goeben* and *Breslau* by Turkish officers and crews." As evidence of Oriental good faith a photograph of the *Goeben* flying the Turkish naval flag was kindly supplied for publication in English newspapers. What could be more convincing? Then, when the moment was ripe and there was no more need for the verisimilitude of photographs, came the rough awakening, announced as follows:

"On October 29th, *without notice and without anything to show that such action was pending,* three Turkish torpedo craft appeared suddenly before Odessa. . . . The same day the cruisers *Breslau* and *Hamidieh* bombarded several commercial ports in the Black Sea, including Novorossisk and Theodosia. In the forenoon of October 30th, the *Goeben* bombarded Sevastopol without causing any serious damage. By way of reprisals the Franco-British squadron in the Eastern

Mediterranean carried out a demonstration against the forts at the entrance to the Dardanelles at daybreak on November 3rd."

No comment which I might make could bite more deeply than the bald quotation describing this irruption of Turkey as "without motive and without anything to show that such action was pending." *Caeci sunt oculi cum animus alias res agit*—The eyes are blind when the mind is obsessed.

CHAPTER VII

IN THE SOUTH SEAS: THE DISASTER OFF CORONEL

Sunset and evening star

. . . .

And after that the dark.

DURING the years 1912 and 1913 the Captain of the British cruiser *Monmouth*, the senior English Naval Officer on the China Station, and Admiral Count von Spee, commanding the German Far-Eastern Squadron, were close and intimate friends.

The intimacy of the chiefs extended to the officers and men of the two squadrons. The English and Germans discussed with one another the chances of war between their nations, and wished one another the best of luck when the scrap came. The German Squadron, which has since been destroyed, was like no other in the Kaiser's Navy. It was commanded by professional officers and manned by long-service ratings. It had taken for its model the English Navy, and it had absorbed much of the English naval spirit. Count von Spee, though a Prussian Junker, was a gentleman, and with Captain von Müller, who afterwards made the name of the *Emden* immortal, was worthy to serve under the White Ensign. Let us always be just to those of our foes who, though they fight with us terribly, yet remain our chivalrous

friends. I will tell a pretty story which will illustrate the spirit of comradeship which existed between the English and German squadrons during those two years before the war.

In December 1912 the *Monmouth* was cruising in the Gulf of Pechili, which resembles a long flask with a narrow bottle neck. Admiral von Spee, who was lying with his powerful squadron off Chifu, in the neck of the bottle, received word from a correspondent that the second Balkan War had brought England and Germany within a short distance of "Der Tag." Von Spee and his officers did not clink glasses to "The Day"; they were professionals who knew the English Navy and its incomparable power; they left silly boastings to civilians and to their colleagues of Kiel who had not eaten of English salt. Count von Spee thought first of his English friend who, in his elderly cruiser, was away up in the Gulf at the mercy of the German Squadron, which was as a cork in its neck. He at once dispatched a destroyer to find the *Monmouth's* captain and to warn him that though there might be nothing in the news it were better for him to get clear of the Gulf. "There may be nothing in the yarn," he wrote, "I have had many scares before. But it would be well if you got out of the Gulf. I should be most sorry to have to sink you." When the destroyer came up with the *Monmouth* she had returned to Wei-hai-wei, and the message was delivered. Her skipper laughed, and sent an answer somewhat as follows: "My dear von Spee, thank you very much. I am here. *J'y suis, J'y reste.* I shall expect you and your guns at breakfast to-morrow morning." War did not

come then; when von Spee did meet and sink the *Monmouth* she had another captain in command, but the story remains as evidence of the chivalrous naval spirit of the gallant and skilful von Spee.

In November 1913 the *Monmouth* left the China Station, and before she went, upon November 6th, her crew were entertained sumptuously by von Spee and von Müller. She was paid off in January 1914, after reaching home, but was recommissioned in the following July for the test mobilisation, which at the moment meant so much, and which a few weeks later was to mean so much more. When the war broke out, the *Monmouth*, with her new officers and men, half of whom were naval reservists, was sent back to the Pacific. The armoured cruiser *Good Hope*, also commissioned in July, was sent with her, and the old battleship *Canopus* was despatched a little later. Details of the movements of these and of other of our war ships in the South Atlantic and Pacific are given in the chapters entitled "The Cruise of the *Glasgow*." The *Glasgow* had been in the South Atlantic at the outbreak of war, and was joined there by the *Good Hope* and *Monmouth*.

Meanwhile war had broken out, and we will for a few moments consider what resulted. The *Emden*, Captain von Müller, was at the German base of Tsing-tau, but Admiral von Spee, with the armoured cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, was among the German Caroline Islands far to the south of the China Sea. The *Dresden* was in the West Indies and the *Leipzig* and *Nürnberg* on the West Coast of Mexico (the Pacific side). The Japanese Fleet undertook to keep von Spee out

of China waters to the north, and the Australian Unit—which then was at full strength and included the battle cruiser *Australia* with her eight 12-inch guns and the light cruisers *Melbourne* and *Sydney*, each armed with eight sixes—made themselves responsible for the Australian end of the big sea area. The *Emden*, disguised as an English cruiser, with four funnels—the dummy one made of canvas—got out of Tsing-tau under the noses of the Japanese watchers, made off towards the Indian Ocean, and pursued that lively and solitary career which came to its appointed end at the Cocos-Keeling Islands, as will be described fully later on in this book. The Australian Unit, burning with zeal to fire its maiden guns at a substantial enemy, sought diligently for von Spee and requisitioned the assistance of the French armoured cruiser *Montcalm*, an old slow and not very useful vessel which happened to be available for the hunt. Von Spee was discovered in his island retreat and pursued as far as Fiji, but the long arm of the English Admiralty then interposed and upset the merry game. We were short of battle cruisers where we wanted them most—in the North Sea—so the *Australia* was summoned home and the remaining ships of the Unit, no longer by themselves a match for Von Spee, were ordered back to Sydney in deep disgust. "A little more," declared the bold Australians, who under their English professional officers had been hammered into a real Naval Unit, "and we would have done the work which the *Invincible* and *Inflexible* had to do later. If we had been left alone there would not have been any disaster off Coronel." While one can sympathise with complaints such as this

from eager fire-eaters, one has to accept their assertions with due caution. The German High Seas Fleet was at that time a more important objective than even von Spee. So the *Australia* sailed for England to join up with the Grand Fleet, and von Spee had rest for several weeks. He was not very enterprising. Commerce hunting did not much appeal to him, though his light cruisers, the *Dresden* and *Leipzig*, did some little work in that line when on their way to join their Chief at Easter Island where the squadron ultimately concentrated. On the way across, von Spee visited Samoa, from which we had torn down the German flag, but did no damage there. On September 22nd, he bombarded Tahiti, in the Society Islands, a foolish proceeding of which he repented later on when the Coronel action left him short of shell with no means of replenishment. For eight days he stayed in the Marquesas Islands taking in provisions, thence he went to Easter Island and Masafuera, and so to Valparaiso, where the Chilian Government, though neutral, was not unbenevolent. He was for three weeks at Easter Island (Chilian territory), coaling from German ships there, and in this remote spot—a sort of Chilian St. Kilda—remained hidden both from the Chilian authorities and from our South Atlantic Squadron.

We must now return to the British Squadron which had been sent out to deal with von Spee as best it might. Cradock with such a squadron, all, except the light cruiser *Glasgow*, old and slow, had no means of bringing von Spee to action under conditions favourable to himself, or of refusing action when conditions were adverse. Von Spee,

with his concentrated homogeneous squadron, all comparatively new and well-armed cruisers, all of about the same speed of twenty-one or twenty-two knots, all trained to a hair by constant work during a three years' commission, had under his hand an engine of war perfect of its kind. He could be sure of getting the utmost out of co-operative efforts. The most powerful in guns of the English vessels was the battleship *Canopus*, which, when the action off Coronel was fought, was 200 miles away to the south. She bore four 12-inch guns in barbettes—in addition to twelve sixes—but she was fourteen years old and could not raise more than about thirteen to fourteen knots except for an occasional burst. Any one of von Spee's ships, with 50 per cent. more speed, could have made rings round her. Had Cradock waited for the *Canopus*,—as he was implored to do by her captain, Grant,—and set the speed of his squadron by hers, von Spee could have fought him or evaded him exactly as he pleased. "If the English had kept their forces together," wrote von Spee after Coronel, "then we should certainly have got the worst of it." This was the modest judgment of a brave man, but it is scarcely true. If the English had kept their forces together von Spee need never have fought; they would have had not the smallest chance of getting near him except by his own wish. Admiral Cradock flew his flag in the armoured cruiser *Good Hope*, which, though of 14,000 tons and 520 feet long, had only two guns of bigger calibre than 6-inch. These were of 9.2 inches, throwing a shell of 380 lb., but the guns, like the ship, were twelve years old. Her speed was about seventeen knots, four or five

knots less than that of the German cruisers she had come to chase! The *Monmouth*, of the "County Class," was as obsolete as the *Good Hope*. Eleven years old, of nearly 10,000 tons, she carried nothing better than fourteen 6-inch guns of bygone pattern. She may have been good for a knot or two more than the *Good Hope*, but her cruising and fighting speed was, of course, that of the flagship.

The one effective ship of the whole squadron was the *Glasgow*, which curiously enough is the sole survivor now of the Coronel action, either German or English. Out of the eight warships which fought there off the Chilian coast on November 1st, 1914, five German and three English, the *Glasgow* alone remains afloat. She is a modern light cruiser, first commissioned in 1911. The *Glasgow* is light, long and lean. She showed that she could steam fully twenty-five knots and could fight her two 6-inch and ten 4-inch guns most effectively. She was a match for any one of von Spee's light cruisers, though unable to stand up to the *Scharnhorst* or *Gneisenau*. The modern English navy has been built under the modern doctrine of speed and gun-power—the *Good Hope*, *Monmouth*, and *Canopus*, the products of a bad, stupid era in naval shipbuilding, had neither speed nor gun-power. The result, the inevitable result, was the disaster of Coronel in which the English ships were completely defeated and the Germans barely scratched. The Germans had learned the lesson which we ourselves had taught them.

When one considers the two squadrons which met and fought off Coronel, in the light of experience cast by war, one feels no surprise that

the action was over in fifty-two minutes. Cradock and his men, 1,600 of them, fought and died.

Sunset and evening star
. . . . .
And after that the dark.

The *Glasgow* would also have been lost had she not been a new ship with speed and commanded by a man with the moral courage to use it in order to preserve his vessel and her crew for the further service of their country. Von Spee, who had the mastery of manœuvre, brought Cradock to action when and how he pleased, and emphasised for the hundredth time in naval warfare that speed and striking power and squadron training will win victory certainly, inevitably, and almost without hurt to the victors. Like the Falkland Islands action of five weeks afterwards, that off Coronel was a gun action. No torpedoes were used on either side. Probably it was one of the last purely gun actions which will be fought in our time.

. . . . .

At the end of October the British and German squadrons were near to one another, though until they actually met off Coronel the British commanders did not know that the concentrated German Squadron was off the Chilian coast. Von Spee knew that an old pre-Dreadnought battleship had come out from England, though he was not sure of her class. He judged her speed to be higher than that of the *Canopus*, which, though powerfully armed, was so lame a duck that she would have been more of a hindrance than a help had Cradock joined up with her. Von Spee had an immense advantage in the greater handiness

and cohesiveness of his ships. The *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* were sisters, completed in 1907, and alike in all respects. Their shooting records were first-class; they were indeed the crack gunnery ships under the German ensign. Their sixteen 8.2-inch guns—eight each—fired shells of 275 lb. weight, nearly three times the weight of the 100-lb. shells fired from the 6-inch guns which formed the chief batteries of their opponents the *Good Hope* and *Monmouth*. They were three months out of dock but they could still steam, as they showed at Coronel, at over twenty knots in a heavy sea. The light cruisers *Dresden, Leipzig* and *Nürnberg* were not identical though very nearly alike. Their armament was the same—ten 4.1-inch guns apiece—and their speed nearly the same. The *Dresden* was the fastest as she was the newest, a sister of the famous *Emden*. None of the German light cruisers was so fast or so powerful as the *Glasgow*, but together they were much more than a match for her, just as the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* together were more than a match for the *Good Hope* and *Monmouth*. When, therefore, von Spee found himself opposed to the British armoured cruisers he was under no anxiety; he had the heels of them and the guns of them; they could neither fight successfully with him nor escape from him. The speedy *Glasgow* might escape—as in fact she did—but the *Good Hope* and the *Monmouth* were doomed from the moment when the action was joined.

I have dwelt upon the characteristics of the rival squadrons at the risk of being wearisome since an understanding of their qualities is essential to an understanding of the action.

On October 31st, the *Glasgow* put into Coronel, a small coaling port near Concepcion and to the south of Valparaiso, which had become von Spee's unofficial base. He did not remain in territorial waters for more than twenty-four hours at a time, but he got what he liked from German ships in the harbour. The *Glasgow* kept in wireless touch with the *Good Hope* and *Monmouth*, which were some fifty miles out at sea to the west, and von Spee picked up enough from the English wireless to know that one of our cruisers was at Coronel. At once he despatched the *Nürnberg* to shadow the *Glasgow*, to stroll as it were unostentatiously past the little harbour, while he with the rest of the squadron stayed out of sight to the north. In the morning of November 1st out came the *Glasgow* and made for the rendezvous where she was to join the other cruisers and the *Otranto*, an armed liner by which they were accompanied. The wireless signals passing between the watching *Nürnberg* and von Spee were in their turn picked up by the *Good Hope*, so that each squadron then knew that an enemy was not far off. Cradock, an English seaman of the fighting type, determined to seek out the Germans, though he must have suspected their superiority of force. Neither side actually knew the strength of the other. Cradock spread out his vessels fan-wise in the early afternoon and ordered them to steam in this fashion at fifteen knots to the north-east.

At twenty minutes past four the nearest ships on either side began to sight one another, and until they did so Cradock had no knowledge that he had knocked up against the whole of the German Pacific Squadron. The German concentration had

THE SOUTH SEAS.

been effected secretly and most successfully. When the *Scharnhorst*, von Spee's flagship, first saw the *Glasgow* and *Monmouth* they were far off to the west-south-west and had to wait for more than half an hour until the *Good Hope*, which was still farther out to the west, could join hands with them. Meanwhile the German ships, which were also spread out, had concentrated on the *Scharnhorst*. They were the *Gneisenau*, *Dresden*, and *Leipzig*, for the *Nürnberg* had not returned from her watching duties. Cradock, who saw at once that the Germans were getting between his ships and the Chilian coast, and that he would be at a grave disadvantage by being silhouetted against the western sky, tried to work in towards the land. But von Spee, grasping his enemy's purpose, set the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* going at twenty knots due south against a heavy sea and forced himself between Cradock and the coast. When the two light cruisers drew up, the four German ships fell into line parallel with the English cruisers and between them and the land. All these preliminary manœuvres were put through while the two squadrons were still twelve miles apart, and they determined the issue of the subsequent action. For von Spee, having thrust the English against the background of the declining sun and being able, with his greater speed, to hold them in this position and to decide absolutely the moment when the firing should begin, had effectively won the action before a shot had been fired. So long as the sun was above the horizon the German ships were lighted up and would have made admirable marks could Cradock have got within range. But von Spee had no intention of letting

him get within range until the sun had actually set and had ceased to give light to Cradock's gunners. His own men for an hour afterwards could see the English ships standing out as clearly as black paper outlines stuck upon a yellow canvas screen. "I had manœuvred," wrote von Spee to a friend, on the day following the action, "so that the sun in the west could not disturb me. . . . When we were about five miles off I ordered the firing to commence. The battle had begun, and with a few changes, of course, I led the line quite calmly." He might well be calm. The greater speed of his squadron had enabled him to outmanœuvre the English ships, and to wait until the sunset gave him a perfect mark and the English no mark at all. He might well be calm. Darkness everywhere, except in the western sky behind Cradock's ships, came down very quickly, the nearly full moon was not yet up, the night was fine except for scuds of rain at intervals. Between seven and eight o'clock—between sunset and moonrise—von Spee had a full hour in which to do his work, and he made the fullest use of the time. At three minutes past seven he began to fire, when the range was between five and six miles, and he hit the *Good Hope* at the second salvo. His consort the *Gneisenau* did the same with the *Monmouth*. It was fine shooting, but not extraordinary, for the German cruisers were crack ships and the marks were perfect. At the third salvo both the *Good Hope* and *Monmouth* burst into flames forrard, and remained on fire, for German shell rained on them continually. They could rarely see to reply and never replied effectively. The *Good Hope's* lower deck guns were smothered

by the sea and were, for all practical purposes, out of action. Yet they fought as best they could. Von Spee slowly closed in and the torrent of heavy shell became more and more bitter. We have no record of the action from the *Good Hope* and *Monmouth*, for not a man was saved from either ship. The *Glasgow*, which, after the *Otranto* had properly made off early in the action—she was not built for hot naval work—had both the *Dresden* and the *Leipzig* to look after, could tell only of her own experiences. Captain Luce in quiet sea service fashion has brought home to us what they were. "Though it was most trying to receive a great volume of fire without a chance of returning it adequately, all kept perfectly cool, there was no wild firing, and discipline was the same as at battle practice. When a target ceased to be visible gunlayers simultaneously ceased fire." Yet the crews of active ratings and reservists struggled gamely to the end. It came swiftly and mercifully.

We have detailed accounts of the action from the German side, of which the best was written by von Spee himself on the following day. There is nothing of boasting or vainglory about his simple story: though the man was German he seems to have been white all through. I have heard much of him from those who knew him intimately, and willingly accept his narrative as a plain statement of fact. Given the conditions, the speed and powers of the opposing squadrons, the skilful preliminary manœuvres of von Spee before a shot was fired, and the veil of darkness which hid the German ships from the luckless English gunners, the result, as von Spee reveals it, was inevitable.

He held his fire until after sunset, and then closing in to about 10,000 yards—a little over five miles—gave the order to begin. He himself led the line in the *Scharnhorst* and engaged the *Good Hope*, the *Gneisenau* following him took the *Monmouth* as her opposite number. The *Leipzig* engaged the *Glasgow*, and the *Dresden* the *Otranto*. The shell from the 8.2-inch batteries of the German armoured cruisers—each could use six guns on a broadside—got home at the second salvo and the range was kept without apparent difficulty. The fires which almost immediately broke out in the *Good Hope* and *Monmouth* gave much aid to the German gunners, who, when the quick darkness of the southern night came down, were spared the use of their searchlights. "As the two big enemy ships were in flames," writes one careful German observer, "we were able to economise our searchlights." Then, closing in to about 5,000 yards, von Spee poured in a terrific fire so rapid and sustained that he shot away nearly half his ammunition. After fifty-two minutes from the firing of the first shell the *Good Hope* blew up. "She looked," wrote von Spee, "like a splendid firework display against a dark sky. The glowing white flames, mingled with bright green stars, shot up to a great height." Cradock's flagship then sank, though von Spee thought for long afterwards that she was still afloat. The *Otranto* had made her escape, but the *Monmouth*, which could not get away, and the *Glasgow*—which at any moment could have shown the enemy her heels—still continued the unequal fight. The night had become quite dark, the flames in the *Monmouth* had burned out or been extinguished, and

the Germans had lost sight of their prey. The *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* worked round to the south, and the *Leipzig* and *Dresden* were sent curving to the north and west, in order to keep the English ships away from the shelter of the land. Just then the light cruiser *Nürnberg*, which had been sent upon the scouting expedition of which I have told, arrived upon the scene of action and encountered the crippled *Monmouth*. Had the English cruiser been undamaged, she could soon have disposed of this new combatant, but she was listing heavily and unable to use her guns. Running up close the *Nürnberg* poured in a broadside which sent the *Monmouth* to the bottom. The *Glasgow*, badly damaged above water, but still full of speed and mettle, could do no more. The big German cruisers were coming up. Her captain took the only possible course. Shortly before the stricken *Monmouth* disappeared under the waves he made off at full speed.

No one was picked up, either from the *Good Hope* or the *Monmouth*. Von Spee, who was not the man to neglect the rescue of his drowning enemies, gives an explanation. He was far from the *Good Hope* when she blew up, but the *Nürnberg* was quite close to the foundering *Monmouth;* why was no attempt made at rescue in her case at least? It was dark and there was a heavy sea running, but the risks of a rescue are not sufficient to excuse the absence of any attempt. The *Nürnberg* had not been in the main action, she was flying up, knowing nothing of what had occurred, when she met and sank the *Monmouth*. Her captain saw other big ships approaching and thought that one of them was the *Good Hope*.

This is von Spee's excuse for the omission of his subordinate to put out boats—or even life lines—but one suspects that the captain of the *Nürnberg* had a bad quarter of an hour when next he met his chief.

The German squadron was undamaged, scarcely touched. Three men were wounded by splinters in the *Gneisenau*. That is the whole casualty list. One 6-inch shell went through the deck of the *Scharnhorst* but did not explode—the "creature just lay down" and went to sleep. "It lay there," writes von Spee, "as a kind of greeting." The light German cruisers were not touched at all. But though the German squadron had come through the fight unharmed, it had ceased to be of much account in a future battle. The silly bombardment of Tahiti, and the action off Coronel, had so depleted the once overflowing magazines that not half the proper number of rounds were left for the heavy guns. No fresh supplies could be obtained. Von Spee could fight again, but he could not have won again had he been opposed to much lighter metal than that which overwhelmed him a few weeks later off the Falkland Islands.

On the second day after the action von Spee returned to Valparaiso. Though his own ship had fought with the *Good Hope* and he had seen her blow up he did not know for certain what had become of her. This well illustrates the small value of observers' estimates of damage done to opponents during the confusion of even the simplest of naval fights. Distances are so great and light is so variable. The destruction of the *Monmouth* was known, but not that of the *Good Hope*. So von Spee made for Valparaiso to find out if the

English flagship had sought shelter there. Incidentally he took with him the first news of his victory, and the large German colony in the Chilian city burned to celebrate the occasion in characteristic fashion. But von Spee gave little encouragement. He was under no illusions. He fully realized the power of the English Navy and that his own existence and that of his squadron would speedily be determined. He "absolutely refused" to be celebrated as national hero, and at the German club, where he spent an hour and a half, declined to drink a toast directed in offensive terms against his English enemies. In his conduct of the fights with our ships, in his orders, in his private letters, Admiral von Spee stands out as a simple honest gentleman.

He was a man not very energetic. Though forcible in action and a most skilful naval tactician, he does not seem to have had any plans for the general handling of his squadron. If an enemy turned up he fought him, but he did not go out of his way to seek after him. He dawdled about among the Pacific Islands during September and at Easter Island during most of October; after Coronel he lingered in and out of Valparaiso doing nothing. He must have known that England would not sit down in idle lamentation, but he did nothing to anticipate and defeat her plans for his destruction. His shortage of coal and ammunition caused him to forbid the commerce raiding which appealed to the officers of his light cruisers, and probably the same weakness made him reluctant to seek any other adventures. For five weeks he made no attempt even to raid the Falkland Islands, which lay helplessly expecting

his stroke, and when at last he started out by the long safe southern route round the Horn, it was to walk into the mouth of the avenging English squadron which had been gathered there to receive him. One thing is quite certain: he heard no whisper of the English plans and expected to meet nothing at the Falkland Islands more formidable than the *Canopus*, the *Glasgow*, and perhaps one or two "County Class" cruisers, such as the *Cornwall* or *Kent*. He never expected to be crunched in the savage jaws of two battle cruisers!

While this kindly, rather indolent German Admiral was marking time off the Chilian coast, the squadron which was to avenge the blunder of Coronel was assembling from the ends of the earth towards the appointed rendezvous off the Brazilian coast. The *Bristol*, a sister of the *Glasgow*, had come in from a long cruise in the West Indies, during which she had met and exchanged harmless shots with another German wanderer, the *Karlsruhe*. The *Invincible* and *Inflexible* were racing down from the north. The *Cornwall* and *Kent*, burning to show that even "County" cruisers were not wholly useless in battle, and the armoured cruiser *Carnarvon* were already in the South Atlantic. The poor old *Canopus* and the *Glasgow* had foregathered at Port Stanley in the Falkland Islands on November 8th, but were immediately ordered north to Montevideo to meet the other cruisers on the passage south. They left in accordance with these orders, but the *Canopus* was turned back by wireless, so that Port Stanley might have some naval protection against the expected von Spee raid. Here the *Canopus* was put aground in the mud, painted in futurist colours, and con-

verted into a land fort. With her four 12-inch guns she could at least have made the inner harbour impassable to the Germans. The *Glasgow* docked for repairs at Rio, and then joined the avenging squadron which had concentrated off Brazil, and with them swept down to the Falkland Islands which were reached upon the evening of December 7th. All the English ships, to which had been committed the destruction of von Spee, had then arrived. The stage was set and the curtain about to go up upon the second and final act of the Pacific drama. Upon the early morning of the following day, as if in response to a call by Fate, von Spee and his squadron arrived. After five weeks of delay he had at last made up his mind to strike.

CHAPTER VIII

IN THE SOUTH SEAS: CLEANING UP

> Now is the winter of our discontent
> Made glorious summer . . .
> And all the clouds that lour'd
> In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.

THE naval operations which culminated in the action off the Falkland Islands are associated vividly in my mind with two little personal incidents. On November 12th, 1914, a week after the distressful news had reached this country of the destruction by the enemy of the cruisers *Good Hope* and *Monmouth* off the Chilian coast, a small slip of paper was brought to me in an envelope which had not passed through the post. I will not say from whom or whence that paper came. Upon it were written these words: "The battle cruisers *Invincible* and *Inflexible* have left for the South Atlantic." That was all, twelve words, but rarely has news which meant so much been packed into so small a space. The German Sea Command would have given a very great deal for the sight of that scrap of paper which, when read, I burned. For it meant that two fast battle cruisers, each carrying eight 12-inch guns, were at that moment speeding south to dispose for ever of von Spee's Pacific Squadron. The battle cruisers docked and coaled at Devonport

on November 9th, 10th and 11th; hundreds of humble folk like myself must have known of their mission and its grim purpose, yet not then nor afterwards until their work was done did a whisper of their sailing reach the ears of Germany.

The *Invincible* and *Inflexible* coaled off St. Vincent, Cape Verde Islands, and again south of the Line. At the appointed rendezvous off Brazil they were joined by the *Carnarvon*, *Kent*, *Cornwall*, and *Bristol*, the armed liner *Orama*, and many colliers. Weeks had passed and yet no word of the English plans, even of the concentration in force, reached von Spee, who still thought that he had nothing more formidable to deal with than a few light cruisers and the old battleship *Canopus*.

Nothing is more difficult to kill than a legend, and perhaps the most invulnerable of legends is that one which attributes to the German Secret Service a superhuman efficiency. I offer to the still faithful English believers two facts which in a rational world would blast that legend for ever: the secret mission of the *Invincible* and *Inflexible* to the Falkland Islands in November–December 1914, and the silent transport of the original British Expeditionary Force across the Channel during the first three weeks of war. And yet, I suppose, the legend will survive. The strongest case, says Anatole France in *Penguin Island*, is that which is wholly unsupported by evidence.

The second incident which sticks in my mind was a scene in a big public hall on the evening of December 9th. Lord Rosebery was in the middle of a recruiting speech—chiefly addressed, as he plaintively observed, to an audience of baldheads —when there came a sudden interruption. Pink

newspapers fluttered across the platform, the coat tails of the speaker were seized, and one of the papers thrust into his hands. We all waited while Lord Rosebery adjusted his glasses and read a stop-press message. What he found there pleased him, but he was in no hurry to impart his news to us. He smiled benevolently at our impatience, and deliberately worked us up to the desired pitch of his dramatic intensity. Then at last he stepped forward and read:

"At 7.30 a.m. on December 8th the *Scharnhorst*, the *Gneisenau*, the *Nürnberg*, the *Leipzig*, and the *Dresden* were sighted near the Falkland Islands by a British Squadron under Vice-Admiral Sir Frederick Sturdee. An action followed in the course of which the *Scharnhorst* (flying the flag of Admiral Graf von Spee), the *Gneisenau*, and the *Leipzig* were . . . *sunk*."

At that word, pronounced with tremendous emphasis, 6,000 people jumped to their feet; they shouted, they cheered, they stamped upon the floor, they sang "Rule Britannia" till the walls swayed and the roof shuddered upon its joists. It was a scene less of exultation than of relief, relief that the faith of the British people in the long arm of the Royal Navy had been so fully justified. Cradock and the gallant dead of Coronel had been avenged. The mess had been cleaned up.

"I thought," said Lord Rosebery, as soon as the tumult had died down, "I thought that would wake you up."

. . . . .

At Devonport the *Invincible* and *Inflexible* had

been loaded "to the utmost capacity," not only with stores and ammunition for their own use, but with supplies to replenish the depleted magazines of their future consorts. They steamed easily well out of sight of land, except when they put in to coal off St. Vincent, and made the trip of 4,000 miles to the rendezvous near the Line in a little over fourteen days. They cleared the Sound in the evening of November 11th, and found the other cruisers I have mentioned awaiting them at the appointed rendezvous off the Brazilian coast in the early morning of November 26th. Two days passed, days of sweltering tropic heat, during which the stores, brought by the battle cruisers, were parcelled out among the other ships and coal was taken in by all the ships from the attendant colliers. The speed of a far-cruising squadron is determined absolutely by its coal supplies. When voracious eaters of coal like battle cruisers undertake long voyages, it behoves them to cut their fighting speed of some twenty-eight knots down to a cruising speed of about one-half. By the morning of Saturday, November 28th, the now concentrated and fully equipped avenging Squadron was ready for its last lap of 2,500 miles to the Falkland Islands. The English vessels, spread out in a huge fan, swept down, continually searching for the enemy off the coasts of South America, where rumour hinted that he had taken refuge. The several ships steamed within the extreme range of visible signalling—so that no tell-tale wireless waves might crackle forth warnings to von Spee. It was high summer in the south and the weather glorious, though the temperature steadily fell as the chilly solitudes of the Falklands

were approached. No Germans were sighted, and the Falkland Islands were reached before noon on December 7th. The Squadron had already been met at the rendezvous and joined by the light cruiser *Glasgow*. The old *Canopus*, so slow and useless as a battleship that she had been put aground on the mud of the inner harbour (Port Stanley) to protect the little settlement there, was found at her useful but rather inglorious post. Most of the vessels anchored in the large outer harbour (Port William) and coaling was begun at once, but though it was continued at dawn of the following day it was not then destined to be completed.

Up to this moment the plans of Whitehall had worked to perfection. The two great battle cruisers had arrived at the rendezvous from England, the Squadron had secretly concentrated and then searched the South Atlantic, the Falkland Islands had been secured from a successful surprise attack which would have given much joy to our enemies, yet not a whisper of his fast-approaching doom had sped over the ether to von Spee. Throughout the critical weeks of our activity he had dawdled irresolutely off Valparaiso. All our ships were ready for battle, even the light cruiser *Glasgow*, so heavily battered in the Coronel action that her inside had been built up with wooden shores till it resembled the "Epping Forest," after which the lower deck had christened it, and she had a hole as big as a church door in one side above the water-line. She had steamed to Rio in this unhappy plight and had been there well and faithfully repaired. Captain Luce and his men were full of fight; they had their hurts and

their humiliation to avenge and meant to get their own back with interest. They did; their chance came upon the following day, and they used it to the full.

Whitehall had done its best, and now came a benevolent Joss to put the crowning seal upon its work. Coronel was bad black Joss, but the Falkland Islands will go down to history as a shining example of the whiteness of the Navy's good Joss when in a mood of real benignity. We desired two things to round off the scheme roughed out at the Admiralty on November 6th: we wanted —though it was the last thing which we expected —we wanted the German Pacific Squadron to walk into the trap which had so daintily been prepared, and they came immediately, on the very first morning after our arrival at the Falkland Islands, at the actual moment when Vice-Admiral Sturdee and Rear-Admiral Stoddart (of the *Carnarvon*), with heads bent over a big chart, were discussing plans of search. They might have come and played havoc with the Islands on any morning during the previous five weeks, yet they did not come until December 8th, when we were just ready and most heartily anxious to receive them hospitably. We wanted a fine clear day with what the Navy calls "full visibility." We got it on December 8th. And this was a very wonderful thing, for the Falkland Islands are cursed with a vile cold climate, almost as cold in the summer of December as in the winter of June. It rains there about 230 days in the year, and even when the rain does not fall fog is far more frequent than sunshine. The climate of the Falklands is even some points more forbidding

than the dreadful climate of Lewis in the Hebrides, which it closely resembles. Yet now and then, at rare intervals, come gracious days, and one of them, the best of the year, dawned upon December 8th. The air was bright and clear, visibility was at its maximum, the sea was calm, and a light breeze blew gently from the north-west. Our gunners had a full view to the horizon and a kindly swell to swing the gunsights upon their marks. For Sturdee and his gunners it was a day of days. Had von Spee come upon a wet and dull morning all would have been spoiled; he could have got away, his squadron could have scattered, and we should have had many weary weeks of search before compassing his destruction. But he came upon the one morning of the year when we were ready for him and the perfect weather conditions made escape impossible. Our gunnery officers from their spotting tops could see as far as even the great 12-inch guns could shoot. When the Fates mean real business there is no petty higgling about their methods; they ladle out Luck not in spoonfuls but with shovels.

The Squadron which had come so far to clean up the mess of Coronel was commanded by Vice-Admiral Sir F. C. Doveton Sturdee, who had been plucked out of his office chair at the Admiralty —he was Director of Naval Intelligence—and thrown up upon the quarter-deck of the *Invincible*. He was the right man for the job, a cool-headed scientific sailor who would make full use of the power and speed of his big ships and yet run no risk of suffering severe damage thousands of miles away from a repairing base. Those who criticise his leisurely deliberation in the action, and the

long-range fighting tactics which dragged out the death agony of the *Scharnhorst* for three and a half hours and of the *Gneisenau* for five, forget that to Sturdee an hour or two of time, and a hundred or two rounds of heavy shell, were as nothing when set against the possibility of damage to his battle cruisers. His business was to sink a very capable and well-armed enemy at the minimum of risk to his own ships, and so he determined to fight at a range—on the average about 16,000 yards (9½ land miles)—which made his gunnery rather ineffective and wasteful, yet certain to achieve its purpose in course of time.

Just as von Spee at Coronel, having the advantage of greater speed and greater power, could do what he pleased with the *Good Hope* and *Monmouth*, so Sturdee with his battle cruisers could do what he pleased with von Spee. The *Invincible* and *Inflexible* could steam at twenty-eight knots —they were clean ships—while the *Scharnhorst* and the *Gneisenau*, now five months out of dock, could raise little more than twenty. The superiority of the English battle cruisers in guns was no less than in speed. Each carried eight 12-inch guns, firing a shell of 850 lb., while von Spee's two armoured cruisers were armed with eight 8.2-inch guns, firing shell of 275 lb. Sturdee, with his great advantage of speed, could set the range outside the effective capacity of von Spee's guns, secure against anything but an accidental plunging shot upon his decks, while the light German 6-inch armour upon sides and barbettes was little protection against his own 12-inch armour-piercing shell. Sturdee could keep his distance and pound von Spee to bits at leisure.

The "visibility" was perfect, space was unlimited, the Germans had no port of refuge, and from dawn to sunset Sturdee had sixteen hours of working daylight. He was in no hurry, though one may doubt if he expected to take so unconscionable a time as three and a half hours to sink the *Scharnhorst* and five hours to dispose of the *Gneisenau*. It was not that Sturdee's gunnery was bad—relatively, that is, to the gunnery of other ships or of other navies. The word bad suggests blame. But it was certainly ineffective. After the Falkland Islands action, and after those running fights in the North Sea between battle cruisers, it became dreadfully clear that naval gunnery is still in its infancy. All the brains and patience and mechanical ingenuity which have been lavished upon the problem of how to shoot accurately from a rapidly moving platform at a rapidly moving object, all the appliances for range-finding and range-keeping and spotting, leave a margin of guesswork in the shooting, which is a good deal bigger than the width of the target fired at. The ease and accuracy of land gunnery in contrast with the supreme difficulty and relative inaccuracy of sea gunnery were brought vividly before me once in conversation with a highly skilled naval gunner. "Take a rook rifle," said he, "put up a target upon a tree, measure out a distance, sit down, and fire. You will get on to your target after two or three shots and then hit it five times out of six. You will be a land gunner with his fixed guns, his observation posts, his aeroplanes or kite balloons, his maps upon which he can measure up his ranges. Then get into a motor-car with your rook rifle, get a friend to drive you

rapidly along a country road, and standing up try what sport you make of hitting the rabbits which are running and jumping about in the fields. That, exaggerated a bit perhaps, is sea gunnery. We know our own speed and our own course, but we don't know exactly either the enemy's speed or the enemy's course; we have to estimate both. As he varies his course and his speed—he does both constantly—he throws out our calculations. It all comes down to range-finding and spotting, trial and error. Can you be surprised that naval gunnery, measured by land standards, is wasteful and ineffective?" "No," said I, "I am surprised that you ever hit at all."

. . . . . .

The English Squadron began to coal at half-past three upon that bright summer morning of December 8th, and the grimy operation proceeded vigorously until eight o'clock, when there came a sudden and most welcome interruption. Columns of smoke were observed far away to the south-east, and, presently, the funnels of two approaching vessels were made out. There were three others whose upper works had not yet shown above the horizon. Coaling was at once stopped and steam raised to full pressure. Never have our engineer staffs more splendidly justified their advance in official status than upon that day. Not only did they get their boilers and engines ready in the shortest possible time, but, in the subsequent action, they screwed out of their ships a knot or two more of speed than they had any right to do. The action was gained by speed and gun power; without the speed—the speed of clean-bottomed

ships against those which, after five months at sea, had become foul—the power of the great guns could not have been fully developed. So, when we remember Sturdee and his master gunners and gunnery officers in the turrets and aloft in the spotting tops, let us also remember the master engineers hidden out of sight far below who gave to the gunners their opportunity.

The battle cruisers, whose presence it was desired to conceal until the latest moment, poured oil upon their furnaces and, veiled in clouds of the densest smoke, awaited the rising of the pressure gauges. In the outer harbour the light cruisers collected, and from her immovable position upon the mud-banks the old *Canopus* loosed a couple of pot shots from her big guns at the distant German at a range of six miles. Admiral Graf von Spee and his merry men laughed—they knew all about the *Canopus*. Then, when all was ready, the indomitable *Glasgow*, the *Kent* (own sister to the sunken *Monmouth*), and the armoured *Carnarvon* issued forth to battle. In the words of an eye-witness, later a prisoner, "The Germans laughed till their sides ached." A few more minutes passed, and then, from under the cover of the smoke and the low fringes of the harbour, steamed grandly out the *Invincible* and *Inflexible*, cleared for action, their huge turrets fore and aft and upon either beam bristling with the long 12-inch guns, their turbines working at the fullest pressure, the flag of Vice-Admiral Sturdee fluttering aloft. There was no more German laughter. Von Spee and his officers and men were gallant enemies, they saw instantly the moment the battle cruisers issued forth, overwhelming in their

speed and power, that for themselves and for their squadron the sun had risen for the last time. They had come for sport, the easy capture of the Falkland Islands, but sport had turned upon the instant of staggering surprise to tragedy; nothing remained but to fight and to die as became gallant seamen. And so they fought, and so they died, all but a few whom we, more merciful than the Germans themselves at Coronel, plucked from the cold sea after the sinking of their ships.

The German Squadron—the two armoured cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, each with eight 8.2-inch guns, and the three light cruisers *Nürnberg*, *Dresden*, and *Leipzig*, each armed with ten 4.1-inch guns—made off at full speed, and for awhile the English Squadron followed at the leisurely gait for the battle cruisers of about twenty knots so as to keep together. It was at once apparent that our ships had the legs of the enemy, and could catch them when they pleased and could fight at any range and in any position which they chose to select. That is the crushing advantage of speed; when to speed is added gun power a fleeing enemy has no chance at all, if no port of refuge be available for him. In weight and power of guns there was no possible comparison. The *Invincible* and *Inflexible*, which had descended from the far north to swab up the mess of Coronel, were at least three times as powerful as the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, crack gunnery ships though they might be. Their 12-inch guns could shoot with ease and with sufficient accuracy for their purpose at a range beyond the full stretch of the German 8.2-inch weapons however deftly they might be handled.

Their 10-inch armour upon the turrets and conning-tower was invulnerable against chance hits when closing in, and the armoured decks covering their inner vitals were practicably impenetrable. The chances of disaster were reduced almost to nothingness by Sturdee's tactics of the waiting game. When at length he gave the order to open fire he kept out at a distance which made the percentage of his hits small, yet still made those hits which he brought off tremendously effective. A bursting charge of lyddite in the open may do little damage, even that contained in a 12-inch shell, but the same charge exploded within the decks of a cruiser is multiplied tenfold in destructiveness.

Presently the German Squadron divided, the enemy light cruisers and attendant transports seeking safety in flight from our light cruisers despatched in chase while the armoured cruisers held on pursued by the two battle cruisers and the armoured *Carnarvon*, whose ten guns were of 7.5- and 6-inch calibre. The *Carnarvon*, light though she was by comparison with the battle cruisers, did admirable and accurate work, and proved in the action to be by no means a negligible consort. There was no hurry. A wide ocean lay before the rushing vessels, the enemy had no opportunity of escape so long as the day held clear and fine, and the English ships could close in or open out exactly as they pleased. During most of the fight which followed the *Invincible* and *Inflexible* steered upon courses approximately parallel with those of the Germans, following them as they dodged and winded like failing hares, always maintaining that dominating position which

in these days of steam corresponds with Nelson's weather gauge. It followed from their position as the chasers that they could not each use more than six guns, but this was more than compensated for by the enemy's inability to use more than four of his heavier guns in the *Scharnhorst* or *Gneisenau*.

I have met and talked with many naval officers and men who have been in action during the present war, and have long since ceased to put a question which received an invariable answer. I used to inquire "Were you excited or sensibly thrilled either when going into action or after it had begun?" This was the substance though not the words of the question. One does not talk in that land fashion with sailor-men. The answer was always the same. "Excited, thrilled of course not. There was too much to do." An action at sea is glorified drill. Every man knows his job perfectly and does it as perfectly as he knows how. Whether he be an Admiral or a ship's boy he attends to his job and has no time to bother about personal feelings. Naval work is team work, the individual is nothing, the team is everything. This is why there is a certain ritual and etiquette in naval honours; personal distinctions are very rare and are never the result of self-seeking. There is no pot-hunting in the Sea Service. Not only are actions at sea free from excitement or thrills, but for most of those who take part in them they are blind. Not one in twenty of those who fight in a big ship see anything at all—not even the gun-layers, when the range is long and they are "following the Control." Calmly and blindly our men go into action, calmly

and blindly they fight obeying exactly their orders, calmly and blindly when Fate wills they go down to their deaths. In their calmness and in their blindness they are the perfected fruits of long centuries of naval discipline. The Sea Service has become highly scientific, yet in taste and in sentiment it has changed little since the days of Queen Elizabeth. The English sailor, then as now, has a catlike hatred of dirt, and never fights so happily as when his belly is well filled. The officers and men of the battle cruisers had been coaling when the enemy so obligingly turned up, and they had breakfasted so early that the meal had passed from their memories. There was plenty of time before firing could begin. So, while the engineers sweated below, those with more leisure scrubbed the black grime from their skins, and changed into their best and brightest uniforms to do honour to a great occasion. Then at noon "all hands went to dinner."

. . . . .

The big guns of the battle cruisers began to pick up the range of the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* at five minutes to one, three hours after the chase had begun, when the distance from the enemy's armoured cruisers was some 18,000 yards, say ten land miles. And while the huge shots fly forth seeking their prey, let us visit in spirit for a few minutes the spotting top of the *Invincible*, and discover for ourselves how it is possible to serve great guns with any approach to accuracy, when both the pursuing and pursued ships are travelling at high speed upon different courses during which the range and direction are continually varying.

The *Invincible* worked up at one time to twenty-nine knots (nearly thirty-four miles an hour), though not for long, since a lower speed was better suited to her purpose, and the firing ranges varied from 22,000 yards down to the comparatively close quarters of six miles, at which the *Scharnhorst* and, later, the *Gneisenau* were sent to the bottom.

From the decks of the *Invincible*, when the main action opened, little could be seen of the chase except columns of smoke, but from the fire control platform one could made out through glasses the funnels and most of the upper works of the German cruisers. At this elevation the sea horizon was distant 26,000 yards (about 15½ land miles), and upon the day of the Falkland Islands fight "visibility" was almost perfect. When an enemy ship can be seen, its distance can be measured within a margin of error of half of one per cent.—fifty yards in ten thousand; that is not difficult, but since both the enemy vessel and one's own ship are moving very fast, and courses are being changed as the enemy seeks to evade one's fire or to direct more efficiently his own guns, the varying ranges have to be kept, which is much more difficult. It follows that three operations have to be in progress simultaneously, of which one is a check upon and a correction of the other two. First, all the range-finders have to be kept going and their readings compared; secondly, the course and speed of one's own ship have to be registered with the closest accuracy and the corresponding speeds and courses of the enemy observed and estimated; thirdly, the pitching of one's shots has to be watched and their errors noted as closely as may be. All this delicate

gunnery work is perfectly mechanical but chiefly human. The Germans, essentially a mechanically inhuman people, try to carry the aid of machinery farther than we do. They fit, for example, a gyroscopic arrangement which automatically fires the guns at a chosen moment in the roll of a ship. We fire as the roll brings the wires of the sighting telescopes upon the object aimed at, and can shoot better when a ship is rolling than when she is travelling upon an even keel. We believe in relying mainly upon the deft eyes and hands of our gun-layers—when the enemy is within their range of vision—and upon control officers up aloft when he is not. German gunnery can be very good, but it tends to fall to pieces under stress of battle. Ours tends to improve in action. Machinery is a good servant but a bad master.

As the shots are fired they are observed by the spotting officers to fall too short or too far over, to one side or to the other, and corrections are made in direction and in range so as to convert a "bracket" into a "straddle" and then to bring off accurate hits.

When, say, the shots of one salvo fall beyond the mark and the shots of the next come down on the near side, the mark is said to be "bracketed." When the individual shots of a salvo fall some too far and others too short, the mark has been "straddled." A straddle is a closed-in bracket. At long ranges far more shots miss than hit, and we are dealing now with ranges up to ten or twelve miles. The bigger the gun the bigger the splash made by its shell when striking the water, and as the spotting officers cannot spot unless they can clearly make out the splashes, there is

an accuracy—an ultimate effective accuracy—in big guns with which smaller ones cannot compete however well they may be served. For, ultimately, in naval gunnery, when ships are moving fast and ranges are changing continually, we come down to trial and error. We shoot and correct, correct and shoot, now and then find the mark and speedily lose it again, as the courses and speeds are changed. Unless we can see the splashes of the shells and are equipped with guns powerful enough to shoot fairly flat—without high elevation—we may make a great deal of noise and expend quantities of shell, but we shall not do much hurt to the enemy.

The Falkland Islands action was the Royal Navy's first experience in long-range war gunnery under favorable conditions of light—and it was rather disappointing. It revealed the immense gap which separates shooting in war and shooting at targets in time of peace. The battle cruisers sank the enemy, and suffered little damage in doing their appointed work, and thus achieved both the purposes which Admiral Sturdee had set himself and his men. But it was a wasteful exhibition, and showed how very difficult it is to sink even lightly armoured ships by gun-fire alone. Our shells at the long ranges set were falling steeply; their effective targets were not the sides but the decks of the Germans, which were not more than seventy feet wide. If one reflects what it means to pitch a shell at a range of ten miles upon a rapidly moving target seventy feet wide, one can scarcely feel surprised that very few shots got fairly home. We need not accept *au pied de la lettre* the declaration of Lieutenant

Lietzmann—a damp and unhappy prisoner—that the *Gneisenau*, shot at for five hours, was hit effectively only twenty times, nor endorse his rather savage verdict that the shooting of the battle cruisers was "simply disgraceful." But every competent gunnery officer, in his moments of expansive candour, will agree that the results of the big-gun shooting were not a little disappointing. The Germans added to our difficulty by veiling their ships in smoke clouds and thus, to some extent cancelled the day's "visibility."

No enemy could have fought against overwhelming odds more gallantly and persistently than did von Spee, his officers, and his highly trained long-service men. Many times, even at the long ranges at which the early part of the action was fought, they brought off fair hits upon the battle cruisers. One 8.2-inch shell from the *Scharnhorst* wrecked the *Invincible's* wardroom and smashed all the furniture into chips except the piano, which still retained some wires and part of the keyboard. Another shell scattered the Fleet Paymaster's money-box and strewed the decks with golden bullets. But it was all useless. Though the *Invincible* was the leading ship, and at one time received the concentrated fire of both the *Scharnhorst* and the *Gneisenau*, she did not suffer a single casualty. And, while she was being peppered almost harmlessly, her huge shells, which now and then burst inboard the doomed German vessels, were setting everything on fire between decks, until the dull red glow could be seen from miles away through the gaping holes in the sides. It was a long-drawn-out agony of Hell.

Firing began seriously at 12.55 and continued,

with intervals of rest for guns and men, till 4.16, when the *Scharnhorst* sank. Three hours and twenty-one minutes of Hell! Through it all the Germans stuck to their work, there was no thought of surrender; they fought so long as a gun could be brought to bear or a round of shell remained in their depleted magazines. Every man in the *Scharnhorst* was killed or drowned; the action was not ended when she went down and her consort *Gneisenau*, steaming through the floating bodies of the poor relics of her company, was compelled to leave them to their fate. For nearly two hours longer the *Gneisenau* kept up the fight. The battle cruisers and the smaller *Carnarvon* closed in upon her, and at a range of some six to seven land miles smashed her to pieces. By half-past five she was blazing furiously fore and aft, and at two minutes past six she rolled over and sank. Her guns spoke up to the last. As she lay upon her side her end was hastened by the Germans themselves, who, feeling that she was about to go, opened to the sea one of the broadside torpedo flats. She sank with her ensign still flying. If the whole German Navy could live, fight, and die like the Far Eastern Pacific Squadron, that Service might in time develop a true Naval Soul.

Those of the crew who remained afloat in the water after the *Gneisenau* sank were picked up by boats from the battle cruisers and the *Carnarvon* —we rescued 108 officers and men. Admiral Sturdee sent them a message of congratulation upon their rescue and of commendation upon their gallantry in battle, and every English sailor did his utmost to treat them as brothers of the sea. Officers and men lived with their captors as guests,

not as prisoners, in wardroom and gun-room, and on the lower deck the English and Germans fought their battle over again in the best of honest fellowship. "There is nothing at all to show that we are prisoners of war," wrote a young German lieutenant to his friends in the Fatherland, expressing in one simple sentence—though perhaps unconsciously—the immortal spirit of the English Sea Service. A defeated enemy is not a prisoner; he is an unhappy brother of the sea, to be dried and clothed and made much of, and to be taught with the kindly aid of strong drink to forget his troubles.

There is little of exhilaration about a sea fight, such as that which I have briefly sketched. It seems, even to those who take part in it, to be wholly impersonal and wholly devilish. Though its result depends entirely upon the human element, upon the machines which men's brains have secreted and which their cunning hands and eyes direct, it seems to most of them while in action to have become nothing loftier than a fight between soulless machines. One cannot wonder. The enemy ship—to those few of the fighting men who can see it—is a spot upon the distant horizon from which spit out at intervals little columns of fire and smoke. There is no sign of a living foe. And upon one's own ship the attention of everyone is absorbed by mechanical operations—the steam steering gear, the fire control, the hydraulic or electric gun mechanism, the glowing fires down below fed by their buzzing air fans, the softly purring turbines. And yet, what now appears to be utterly inhuman and impersonal is in reality as personal and human as was fighting in the days

of yard-arm distances and hand-to-hand boarding. The Admiral who, from his armoured conning-tower, orders the courses and maintains the distances best suited to his terrible work; the Fire Director watching, aiming, adjusting sights with the minute care of a marksman with his rifle; the officers at their telescopes spotting the gouts of foam thrown up by the bursting shells; the engineers intent to squeeze the utmost tally in revolutions out of their beloved engines; the stokers each man rightly feeling that upon him and his efforts depends the sustained speed which alone can give mastery of manœuvre; the seamen at their stations extinguishing fire caused by hostile shells; the gunners following with huge blind weapons the keen eyes directing them from far aloft; all these are personal and very human tasks. A sea fight, though it may appear to be one between machinery, is now as always a fight between men. Battles are fought and won by men and by the souls of men, by what they have thought and done in peace time as a preparation for war, by what they do in war as the result of their peace training.

The whole art of successful war is the concentration upon an enemy at a given moment of an overwhelming force and the concentration of that force outside the range of his observation. Both these things were done by the Royal Navy between November 6th and December 8th, 1914, and their fruits were the shattered remains of von Spee's squadron lying thousands of fathoms deep in the South Atlantic. But nothing which the Admiralty planned upon November 6th would have availed had not the Royal Navy designed

and built so great a force of powerful ships that, when the far-off call arose, two battle cruisers could be spared to travel 7,000 miles from the North Sea to the Falkland Islands without sensibly endangering the margin of safety of the Grand Fleet at home.

While the *Invincible* and *Inflexible* were occupying the front of the battle stage and disposing of the hostile stars, the English light cruisers were enjoying themselves in the wings in a more humble but not less useful play. The cruiser *Kent* astonished everybody. She was the lame duck of the Squadron, a slow old creature who could with extreme difficulty screw out seventeen knots, so that, in the company of much faster boats, her armament of fourteen 6-inch guns appeared to be practically wasted. Yet this elderly County cruiser, so short of coal that her fires were fed with boats, ladders, doors, and officers' furniture, got herself moving at over twenty-one knots, chased and caught the *Nürnberg*—which ought to have been able to romp round her if one of her boilers had not been out of action—and sank the German vessel out of hand. Afterwards her officers claimed with solemn oaths that she had done twenty-four knots, but there are heights to which my credulity will not soar. One is compelled on the evidence to believe that she did catch the *Nürnberg*, but how she did it no one can explain, least of all, I fancy, her Engineer Commander himself. The *Leipzig* was rapidly overhauled by the speedy *Glasgow*, who sank her with the aid of the *Cornwall* and so repaid in full the debt of Coronel. The cruiser *Bristol*, a sister of the *Glasgow*, was sent after the German Squadron's transports and col-

liers, and, in company with the armed liner *Macedonia*, "proceeded," in naval language, "to destroy them." Out of the whole German Squadron the light cruiser *Dresden* (own sister to the *Emden*) alone managed to get away. She had turbine engines and fled without firing a shot. She passed a precarious hunted existence for three months, and was at last disposed of off Robinson Crusoe's Island on March 14th, 1915. The *Glasgow*, still intent upon collecting payment for her injuries, and our aged but active friend the *Kent*, were in at her death, which was not very glorious. I will tell her story in its proper place. So ended that most dainty operation, the wiping out of the German Pacific Squadron and the cleaning up of the Mess of Coronel. Throughout, our sailors had to do only with clean above-water fighting. There were no nasty sneaking mines or submarines to hamper free movement; the fast ship and the big gun had full play and did their work in the business-like convincing fashion which the Royal Navy has taught us to expect from it.

. . . . .

[For what follows I have none but German evidence, yet am loth to disbelieve it. I cannot bring myself to conceive it possible that the dull Teutonic imagination could, unaided by fact, round off in so pretty a fashion the story of the Falkland Islands. My naval friends laugh at me. They say the yarn is wholly impossible.]

More than a year afterwards some fishermen upon the barren Schleswig coast observed a little water-worn dinghy lying upon the sand. She was an open boat about twelve feet long, too frail

a bark in which to essay the crossing of the North Sea. Yet upon this little dinghy was engraved the name of the *Nürnberg!* Like a homing pigeon this frail scrap of wood and iron had wandered by itself across the world from that far-distant spot where its parent vessel had been sunk by the *Kent.* It had drifted home, empty and alone, through 7,000 miles of stormy seas. I like to picture to myself that Odyssey of the *Nürnberg's* dinghy during those fourteen months of lonely ocean travel. Those who know and love ships are very sure that they are alive. They are no soulless hulks of wood or steel or iron, but retain always some spiritual essence distilled from the personality of those who designed, built, and sailed them. It may be that in her dim blind way this fragment of a once fine cruiser, all that was left of a splendid squadron, was inspired to bring to her far-away northern home the news of a year-old tragedy. So she drifted ever northwards, scorched by months of sun and buffeted by months of tempest, until she came at last to rest upon her own arid shores. And the spirits of German sailors, which had accompanied her and watched over her during those long wanderings, must, when they saw her ground upon the Schleswig sands, have passed to their sleep content.

CHAPTER IX

HOW THE "SYDNEY" MET THE "EMDEN"

Forward, each gentleman and knight!
Let gentle blood show generous might
And chivalry redeem the fight!

THE Luck of the Navy is not always good. There are wardrooms in the Grand Fleet within which to mention any Joss except of the most devilish blackness may lead to blasphemy and even to blows. One can sympathise. Those who sped on May 31st, 1916, across 400 miles of sea and who, though equipped with all the paraphernalia of fire-directors, spotting-officers, range-fingers, control instruments, grizzled gun-layers and tremendous wire-wound guns, failed to get in a single shot at an elusive enemy, are dangerous folk to chaff. If to them had been vouchsafed the great chance which came to the Salt of the Earth and the Fifth B. S. there would not now be a German battleship afloat! Still, in face of blazing examples of bad Joss such as this, I will maintain that there are pixies sitting up aloft who have a tender regard for the Royal Navy and who, every now and then, ladle out to it toothsome morsels of unexpected, astounding, incredible Luck.

For how else can one explain the action at the Falkland Islands? There was sheer luck in every

detail of it, luck piled upon luck. Sturdee with his two battle-cruisers raced through 7,000 miles of ocean, from Plymouth to Port Stanley, and not a whisper of his coming sped over the wireless to von Spee. Yet hundreds knew of Sturdee's mission—even I knew before he had cleared the English Channel. During five weeks, from the Coronel battle until December 7th, the Falkland Islands were exposed almost helpless to a raid by von Spee's victorious squadron. Yet he delayed his coming until December 8th—the day after the *Invincible* and *Inflexible* had arrived to gobble him up. As if these two miracles were not sufficient —a month of silence in those buzzing days of enemy agents and wireless telegraphy, and von Spee's arrival off Port Stanley at the moment most dangerous for him and most convenient for us—the Fates worked for the Navy yet another. They gave to Sturdee upon December 8th, 1914, perfect weather, full visibility, and a quiet sea in a corner of ocean where rain and fog are the rule and clear weather almost a negligible exception. The Falkland Islands do not see half a dozen such days as that December 8th in the whole circuit of the year. Von Spee came and to Sturdee were granted a long southern summer day, perfect visibility, a limitless ocean of space, and a benign easy swell to swing the gunsights kindly upon their mark. It was a day that gunners pray for, sometimes dream of, but very rarely experience in battle.

Less conspicuously but not less benignantly did the kindly Fates work up the scene for the destruction of the *Emden*. They made all their preparations in silence and then switched up the curtain

at the moment chosen by themselves. In the Falkland Islands action Luck interposed to perfect the Navy's long-laid plans and to add to the scheme those artistic touches of which man unaided is incapable. But the *Sydney-Emden* action was fortuitous, quite unplanned, flung off at a moment when Luck might have seemed to be wholly on the side of the raider. The *Emden* had destroyed 70,000 tons of shipping in seven weeks and vanished after each exploit upon an ocean which left no tracks. She seemed to be as elusive and dangerous as the Flying Dutchman. But perhaps her commander, von Müller, a most ingenious and gallant seaman, had committed that offence, which the Athenians and Eton boys call hubris, and had neglected to pay due homage for the good fortune which was poured upon him in plenty. For the Fates wearied of their sport with him and with us, withdrew their mantle of protection, and suddenly delivered the *Emden* to the *Sydney* with that artistic thoroughness which may always be seen in their carefully planned work. Luck is no bungler, but Luck is a most jealous mistress. If Sturdee and Glossop are wise they will sacrifice their dearest possessions while there is yet time. The *Invincible* is at the bottom of the North Sea and the *Inflexible* was mined in the Dardanelles. The *Sydney* is a pretty little ship and I should grieve to see her suffer for her good luck of three years ago.

. . . . .

Take a chart of the Indian Ocean and draw a line from Fremantle in Australia to Colombo in Ceylon. The middle point of this line will be seen

to lie about fifty miles east of the Cocos-Keeling Islands. Now draw another line from Cocos to the Sunda strait, a line which will be seen to bisect at right angles the Fremantle-Colombo line. After this exercise in Euclid examine that point without parts and without magnitude, fifty miles east of Cocos, where the tracks intersect. It is a very interesting point, for upon the tropical night of November 8th, 1914, it was being approached by two hostile naval forces each of which was entirely ignorant of the nearness of the other. Coming up from Australia bound for Colombo steamed a fleet of transports under the charge of Captain Silver of H.M. Australian light cruiser *Melbourne*. Upon the left of Captain Silver, and nearest to the Cocos Islands, was Captain Glossop in the sister ship *Sydney*, and away to the right was a Japanese light cruiser. Upon the line from the Sunda strait to the Cocos Islands was steaming the famous raider *Emden*, with an attendant collier, bound upon a mission of destruction there. The *Emden* crossed the head of the convoy about three hours before it reached the point of intersection of the two tracks, and went on to demolish the cable and wireless station on the Islands. Meanwhile, wholly unconscious of the scene-setting upon which the Fates were busy, the convoy sailed on, crossed the *Emden's* track and cut that vessel off from any chance of escape to the east. To the west the ocean stretches unbroken for limitless miles. At half-past six in the morning the *Emden* appeared off the Cocos Islands and the watching wireless operators at once sent out a warning to all whom it might concern that a foreign warship was in sight. It greatly concerned Captain

HOW THE "SYDNEY" MET THE "EMDEN."

Silver of the *Melbourne,* who ordered Captain Glossop to proceed in the *Sydney* to the Islands in order to investigate. The *Sydney* was nearest to the Islands, was a clean ship not three weeks out of dock, was in trim for the highest possible speed and, though largely manned by men in course of training, was in charge of experienced officers "lent" by the Royal Navy to the Australian Fleet Unit.

In the old sailing-ship days it was more common than it is now for fighting ships to pass close to one another without detection. Whole fleets used then to do it in a way which now seems always unbelievable. The classical example is that of Napoleon and Nelson in June, 1798. On the night of June 30th–July 1st, Napoleon with a huge fleet of transports, escorted by Admiral Brueys' squadron, crossed the Gulf of Candia and reached Alexandria on the afternoon of the 1st. Nelson, who had been at Alexandria in search of his enemy, left on June 29th, and sailed slowly against adverse winds to the north. Though the French and British fleets covered scores of miles of sea they passed across one another, each without suspicion of the presence of the other. Nelson was very short of frigates. It is not remarkable that the British convoy and the *Emden* on the night of November 8th, 1914, should so nearly have met without mutual detection; what is wonderful is that the *Emden* should have chosen the day and hour for raiding the Cocos Islands when a greatly superior British force was barely fifty miles distant and placed by accident in a position which cut off all prospects of escape. It was a stroke of Luck for us which exactly paralleled the occasion of

von Spee's raid a month later upon the Falkland Islands.

By seven o'clock Glossop and the *Sydney* were ready to leave upon their trip of investigation—they had no knowledge of what was before them—and during the next two and a quarter hours they steamed at twenty knots towards the distant cable station. In the meantime the *Emden* had sent a boat ashore and the work of destruction of the station was completed by 9.20 a.m. Everything fitted exactly into its place, for the Fates are very pretty workmen. The *Emden* knew nothing of the *Sydney's* coming, but as Glossop sped along his wireless receivers took up the distress calls from Cocos. He learned that the enemy warship had sent a boat ashore—and then came interruptions in the signals which showed that the wireless station had been raided. Naval officers do not get excited—they have too much of urgency upon which to concentrate their minds—but to those in the *Sydney* must have come some thrills at the unknown prospect. Their ship and their men were new and untried in war. Their guns had never fired a shot except in practice. Before them might be the *Emden* or the *Königsberg* or both together. They did not know, but as they rushed through the slowly heaving tropic sea they serenely, exactly, prepared for action.

The light cruiser *Sydney*, completed in 1913 for the Australian Unit, is very fast and powerful. She is 5,600 tons, built with the clipper bows and lines of a yacht, and when oil is sprayed upon her coal furnaces can steam at over twenty-five knots. She bears upon her deck eight 6-inch guns of the latest pattern, one forward, one aft,

and three on either beam, so that she can fire simultaneously from five guns upon either broadside. Her lyddite shells weigh one hundred pounds each. She was, and is, of the fast one-calibre type of warship which, whether as light cruiser, battle cruiser, or heavy battleship, gives to our Navy its modern power of manœuvre and concentrated fighting force. Speed and gun-power, with the simplicity of control given by guns all of one size, are the doctrines upon which the New Navy has been built, and by virtue of which it holds the seas. The *Sydney* was far more powerful than the *Emden*, whose ten guns were of 4.1-inch, firing shells of thirty-eight pounds weight. The German raider had been out of dock in warm waters for at least three and a half months, her bottom was foul, and her speed so much reduced that in the action which presently began she never raised more than sixteen knots. In speed as in gun-power she was utterly outclassed.

Let us visit the *Sydney* as she prepares for action on the morning of the fight just as she had prepared day after day in practice drill at sea. Before the foremast stands the armoured conning tower—exactly like a closed-in jam-pot—designed for the captain's use; forward of the tower rises the two-storeyed bridge, the upper part of which is the station of the gunnery control officer; upon the mast, some fifty feet up, is fitted a spotting top for another officer. This distribution of executive control may look very pretty and scientific, but Glossop, who had tested it in practice, proposed to fight on a system of his own. If a captain is cooped up in a conning tower, with the restricted vision of a mediæval knight through a

vizard, a gunnery lieutenant is perched on the upper bridge by the big range-finder, and another lieutenant is aloft in the spotting top, the difficulties of communication in a small cruiser are added to the inevitable confusion of a fight. So the armoured jam-pot and the crow's nest aloft were both abandoned, and Glossop placed himself beside his Gunnery Lieutenant Rahilly upon the upper bridge with nothing between their bodies and the enemy's shot except a frail canvas screen. Accompanying them was a lieutenant in charge of certain instruments. At the back of the bridge —which measured some ten feet by eight—stood upon its pedestal the principal range-finder with a seat at the back for the operator. This concentration of control upon the exposed upper bridge had its risks, as will presently appear, but is made for simplicity and for the rapid working both of the ship and of her guns. Another lieutenant, Geoffrey Hampden, was in charge of the after control station, where also was fitted a range-finder. When a ship prepares for action the most unhappy person on board is the Second in Command — in this instance Lieutenant-Commander John F. Finlayson (now Commander)— who by the rules of the Service is condemned to safe and inglorious, though important duties in the lower conning tower. Here, seeing little or nothing and wrapped like some precious egg in cotton wool, the poor First Lieutenant is preserved from danger so that, if his Chief be killed or disabled, he at least may remain to take over command.

From the upper fore bridge of the *Sydney* we can see the guns' crews standing ready behind

their curved steel screens and note that as the ship cuts through the long ocean swell the waves break every now and then over the fo'c'sle and drench the gun which stands there. At 9.15 land is sighted some ten miles distant and five minutes later a three-funnelled cruiser, recognised at once as the *Emden*, is seen running out of the port. Upon the *Sydney* a bugle blows, and then for twenty minutes all is quiet orderly work at Action Quarters. To the *Emden* the sudden appearance of the *Sydney* is a complete surprise. Her destruction party of three officers and forty men are still ashore and must be left behind if their ship is to be given any, the most slender, chance of escape. Captain von Müller recognises the *Sydney* at once as a much faster and more heavily gunned ship than his own. His one chance is to rush at his unexpected opponent and utilise to the utmost the skill of his highly trained gunners and the speed with which they can work their quick-firing guns. If he can overwhelm the *Sydney* with a torrent of shell before she can get seriously home upon him he may disable her so that flight will be possible. In rapid and good gunnery, and in a quick bold offensive, may rest safely; there is no other chance. So out he comes, makes straight for the *Sydney* as hard as he can go and gives her as lively a fifteen minutes as the most greedy of fire-eaters could desire.

When the two cruisers first see one another they are 20,000 yards distant, but as both are closing in the range comes quickly down to 10,500 yards (six land miles). To the astonishment both of the Captain and Gunnery Lieutenant of the *Sydney*, who are together looking out from the upper fore

bridge, von Müller opens fire at this very long range for his small 4.1-inch guns and gets within a hundred yards at his first salvo. It is wonderful shooting. His next is just over and with the third he begins to hit. At the long range the *Emden's* shells fall steeply—at an angle of thirty degrees—rarely burst and never ricochet from the sea. They whine overhead in torrents, plop into the sea on all sides, and now and then smash on board. One reaches the upper fore bridge, passes within a foot of Lieutenant Rahilly's head, strikes the pedestal of the big range-finder, glances off without bursting, cuts off the leg of the operator who is sitting behind, and finishes its career overboard. If that shell had burst Glossop and his Gunnery Lieutenant, together with their colleague at the rate-of-change instrument, must have been killed or seriously wounded and the Second in Command would have been released from his thick steel prison. Not one of them was six feet distant from where the shell struck in their midst. The range-finder is wrecked and its operator killed, but the others are untouched. A few minutes later two, possible three, shells hit the after control, wound everyone inside, and wipe that control off the effective list.

But meanwhile the officers of the *Sydney* and their untried but gallant and steady men have not been idle. Their first salvo fired immediately after the *Emden* opened is much too far, their second is rather wild and ragged, but with the third some hits are made. The *Sydney* had fortunately just secured her range when the principal range-finder was wrecked and the after control scattered, and Gunnery Lieutenant Rahilly is able

to keep it by careful spotting and rate-of-change observations. Glossop, who has the full command given by superior speed, manœuvres so as to keep out to about 8,000 yards, to maintain as nearly constant a rate of change as is possible, and to present the smallest danger space to the enemy. The *Emden's* first effort to close in has failed, and now that the *Sydney's* 100-pound shells begin to burst well on board of her the *Emden's* one chance upon which von Müller has staked everything has disappeared. During the last fifteen minutes the *Sydney* was hit ten times, but afterwards not at all; the *Emden* was hit again and again during the long-drawn-out two hours of the hopeless struggle. After twenty minutes the *Emden's* forward funnel went and she caught fire aft. Her steering gear was wrecked and she became dependent upon the manipulation of her propellers, and the inevitable falling off in speed to about thirteen knots. During the early critical minutes of the action the *Sydney* had the *Emden* upon her port side, but all her casualties were suffered upon the starboard or disengaged side due to the steepness with which the German shells were falling. Once she was hit upon the two-inch side armour over the engine room and the shell, which this time burst, left a barely discernible scratch. Another shell fell at the foot of a starboard gun pedestal in the open space behind the shield, burst and wounded the gun's crew but left the gun unhurt except for a spattering of a hundred tiny dents. The electric wires were not even cut. It is remarkable that during the whole of the action no electric wires in any part of the *Sydney* were damaged. As I have told both gun controls of the *Sydney*

were hit during the first few minutes though only the after one was put out of action; the *Emden*, less fortunate, had both her controls totally destroyed and all the officers and men within them killed.

After the lapse of about three-quarters of an hour the *Emden* had lost two funnels and the foremast; she was badly on fire aft and amidships, so that at times nothing more than the top of the mainmast could be seen amid the clouds of steam and smoke. Her guns, now occasionally firing, gave out a short yellow flash by which they could be distinguished from the long dark red flames of the *Sydney's* bursting lyddite. Once she disappeared so completely that the cry went up from the *Sydney* that she had sunk, but she appeared again, blazing, almost helpless. Glossop, who had been circling round to port, then drew in to a range of 5,500 yards—which in the absence of the range-finder was wrongly estimated at under 5,000—and determined to try a shot with a torpedo. It was a difficult shot as the torpedo gunner was obliged to set his gyroscope to a definite angle and then wait until the rapidly turning *Emden* came upon his bearing. But in spite of the difficulties it was very good; the torpedo ran straight for its mark and then stopped short at the distance of 5,000 yards for which it had been set. The torpedo crews, naturally enough, wanted forthwith to let off all their mouldies, just to show the gunners how the business should be done with, but the hard-hearted Glossop forbade. The moment after the one had been fired he swung the ship round to starboard, opened out his range, and resumed the distressful game of gun-pounding.

The *Emden* also went away to starboard for about four miles and then von Müller, finding that his ship was badly pierced under water as well as on fire, put about again and headed for the North Keeling Island, where he ran aground. The *Sydney* followed, saw that her beaten enemy was irretrievably wrecked, and went away to deal with the *Emden's* collier—a captured British ship *Buresk* — which had hovered about during the action but upon which Glossop had not troubled to fire. The *Emden* fired no torpedoes in the action, for though von Müller had three left his torpedo flat was put out of business early in the fight.

Though the *Emden* was beaten and done for, the gallantry and skill with which she had fought could not have been exceeded. She was caught by surprise, and to some extent unprepared, yet within twenty minutes of the *Sydney's* appearance upon the sky line von Müller was pouring a continuous rain of shell upon her at over 10,000 yards range and maintaining both his speed of fire and its accuracy until the hundred-pound shots bursting on board of him had smashed up both his controls, knocked down his foremast, and put nine of his ten guns out of action. Even then the one remaining gun continued to fire up to the last. The crew of the *Sydney*, exposed though many of them were upon the vessel's open decks—a light cruiser has none of the protection of a battleship—bore themselves as their Anzac fellow-countrymen upon the beaches and hills of Gallipoli. At first they were rather ragged through over-eagerness, but they speedily settled down. The hail of shell which beat upon them was unceasing, but they

paid as little heed to it as if they had passed their lives under heavy fire instead of experiencing it for the first time. Upon Glossop and his lieutenants on the upper bridge, and in the transmission room below, was suddenly thrown a new and urgent problem. With the principal range-finder gone and the after-control wrecked in the first few minutes, they were forced to depend upon skilful manœuvring and spotting to give accuracy to their guns. They solved their problem ambulando, as the Navy always does, and showed that they could smash up an opponent by mother wit and sea skill when robbed by the aid of science. It is good to be equipped with all the appliances which modern ingenuity has devised; it is still better to be able at need to dispense with them.

I love to write of the cold fierce energy with which our wonderful centuries-old Navy goes forth to battle, but I love still more to record its kindly solicitude for the worthy opponents whom its energy has smashed up. Once a fight is over it loves to bind up the wounds of its foes, to drink their health in a friendly bottle, and to wish them better luck next time. When he had settled with the collier *Buresk*, and taken off all those on board of her, Glossop returned to the wreck of the *Emden* lying there helpless upon the North Keeling Island. The foremast and funnels were gone, the brave ship was a tangle of broken steel fore and aft, but the mainmast still stood and upon it floated the naval ensign of Germany. Until that flag had been struck the *Sydney* could not send in a boat or deal with the crew as surrendered prisoners. Captain Glossop is the kindliest of men, it went against all his instincts to fire at that wreck upon

which the forms of survivors could be seen moving about, but his duty compelled him to force von Müller into submission. For a quarter of an hour he sent messages by International code and Morse flag signals, but the German ensign remained floating aloft. As von Müller would not surrender he must be compelled, and compelled quickly and thoroughly. In order to make sure work the *Sydney* approached to within 4,000 yards, trained four guns upon the *Emden*, and then when the aim was steady and certain smashed her from end to end. The destruction must have been frightful, and it is probable that von Müller's obstinacy cost his crew greater casualties than the whole previous action. These last four shots did their work, the ensign came down, and a white flag of surrender went up. It was now late in the afternoon, the tropical night was approaching, and the *Sydney* left the *Emden* to steam to Direction Island some fifteen miles away and to carry succour to the staff of the raided cable and wireless station. Before leaving he sent in a boat and an assurance that he would bring help in the morning.

Although the distance from Direction Island, where the action may be said to have begun, to North Keeling Island, where it ended, is only fifteen miles the courses followed by the fighting vessels were very much longer. They are shown upon the von Müller-Glossop plan, printed on page 193. The *Emden* was upon the inside and the *Sydney*—whose greatly superior speed gave her complete mastery of manœuvre—was upon the outside. The *Emden's* course works out at approximately thirty-five miles and the *Sydney's* at fifty miles. The officers and men who are

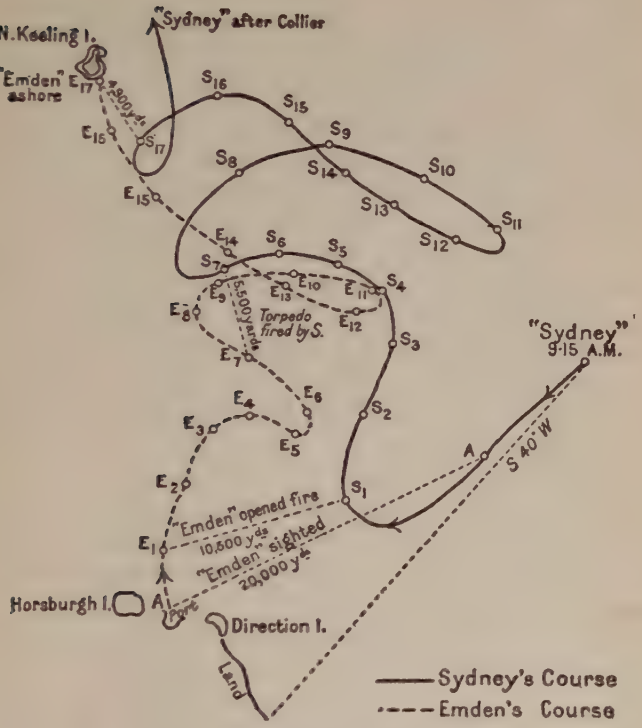
fighting a ship stand, as it were, in the midst of a brilliantly lighted stage and may receive more than their due in applause if one overlooks the sweating engineers, artificers, and stokers who, hidden far below, make possible the exploits of the stars. At no moment during the whole action, though ventilating fans might stop and minor pipes be cut, did the engines fail to give Glossop the speed for which he asked. His success and his very slight losses—four men killed and sixteen wounded—sprang entirely from his speed, which, when required, exceeded the twenty-five knots for which his engines were designed. When, therefore, we think of Glossop and Rahilly, who from that exposed upper bridge were manœuvring the ship and directing the guns, we must not forget Engineer Lieutenant-Commander Coleman and his half-naked men down below, who throughout that broiling day in the tropics nursed those engines and toiled at those fires which brought the guns to fire upon the enemy.

True to his promise Glossop brought the *Sydney* back to the *Emden* at eleven o'clock on the morning of November 10th, having borrowed a doctor and two assistants from Direction Island, and then began the long task—which the Navy loves only less than actual battle—of rescue and care for the sufferers by its prowess. North Keeling Island is an irregular strip of rock, boulders and sand almost entirely surrounding a large lagoon. It is studded with cocoanut palms and infested with red land-crabs. An unattractive spot. The *Emden* was aground upon the weatherside and the long rollers running past her stern broke into surf before the mainmast. Lieutenant R. C. Garsia, going

out to her in one of the *Sydney's* boats, was hauled by the Germans upon her quarter-deck, where he found Captain von Müller, whose personal luck had held to the last, for he was unwounded. Von Müller readily gave his parole to be amenable to the *Sydney's* discipline if the surviving Germans were transhipped. The *Emden* was in a frightful state. She was burned out aft, her decks were piled with the wreck of three funnels and the foremast, and within her small space of 3,500 tons, seven officers and 115 men had been killed by high-explosive shell and splinters. Her condition may be suggested by the experience of a warrant officer of the *Sydney* who, after gravely soaking in her horrors, retailed them in detail to his messmates. For two days thereafter the warrant officers' mess in the *Sydney* lost their appetites for meat: one need say no more! The unwounded and slightly wounded men were first transferred to the boats of the *Sydney* and *Buresk*, but for the seriously wounded Neil-Robertson stretchers had to be used so that they might be lowered over the side into boats. This had to be done during the brief lulls between the rollers. By five o'clock the *Emden* was cleared of men and Captain von Müller went on board the *Sydney*, which made at once for the only possible landing place on the island in order to take off some Germans who had got ashore. To the surprise of everyone it was then discovered that several wounded men, including a doctor, had managed to reach the shore and were somewhere among the scrub and rocks. Night was fast coming on, the wounded ashore were without food and drink—except what could be obtained from cocoanuts—and were cut off

from all assistance except that which the *Sydney* could supply. The story of how young Lieutenant Garsia drove in through the surf after dark—at the imminent hazard of his whaler and her crew—hunted for hours after those elusive Germans, was more than once hopelessly "bushed," and finally came out at the original landing place, is a pretty example of the Navy's readiness to spend ease and risk life for the benefit of its defeated enemies. In the morning the rescue party of English sailors and unwounded Germans, supplied with cocoanuts and an improvised stretcher made of bottom boards and boathooks, at last discovered the wounded party, which had not left the narrow neck of land opposite the stranded *Emden*. Lieutenant Schal of the *Emden*, who was with them, eagerly seized upon the cocoanuts and cut them open for the wounded, who had been crying for water all night and for whom he had not been able to find more than one nut. The wounded German doctor had gone mad the previous afternoon, insisted upon drinking deeply of salt water, and so died. The four wounded men who remained alive were laboriously transferred to the *Sydney* and the dead were covered up with sand and boulders. "A species of red land-crab with which the ground is infested made this the least one could do." The reports of Navy men may seem to lack grace, but they have the supreme merit of vivid simplicity. That short sentence, which I have quoted, makes us realise that waterless crab-haunted night of German suffering more vividly than a column of fine writing.

All was over, and the packed *Sydney* headed away for her 1,600-mile voyage to Colombo.



THE "SYDNEY-EMDEN" ACTION.

To her company of about 400 she had added 11 German officers and 200 men, of whom 3 officers and 53 men were wounded. The worst cases were laid upon her fo'c'sle and quarter-deck, the rest huddled in where they could. It was a trying voyage, but happily the weather was fine and windless, the ship as steady as is possible in the Indian Ocean, and the Germans well behaved, Von Müller and Glossop, the conquered and conqueror, the guest and the host, became friendly and mutually respecting during those days in the *Sydney*. I like to think of those two, in the captain's cabin, putting their heads together over sheets of paper and at last evolving the plan of the *Sydney-Emden* action which is printed here. Von Müller did the greater part of it, for, as Glossop remarked, "he had the most leisure." A cruiser skipper with 400 of his own men on board and 200 prisoners, is not likely to lack for jobs. To the von Müller-Glossop plan I have added a few explanatory words, but otherwise it is as finally approved by those who knew most about it.

Some single-ship actions remain more persistently in the public memory and in the history books than battles of far greater consequence. They are easy to describe and easy to understand. One immortal action is that of the *Shannon* and the *Chesapeake;* another is that of the *Sydney* and the *Emden*. It was planned wholly by the Fates which rule the Luck of the Navy, it was tought cleanly and fairly and skilfully on both sides, and the faster, more powerful ship won. I like to picture to myself the *Sydney* heading for Colombo, bearing upon her crowded decks the captives of her bow and spear, her guns and her

engines, not vaingloriously triumphant, but humbly thankful to the God of Battles. To her officers and crew their late opponents were now guests who could discuss with them, the one with the other, the incidents of the short fierce fight dispassionately as members of the same profession, though serving under different flags, just as Glossop and von Müller discussed them in the after cabin under the quarter-deck when they bent their heads over their collaborated plan.

CHAPTER X

FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

SINCE I have not been so foolish as to set myself the task of writing a history of the Naval War, I am not hampered by any trammels of chronological sequence. It is my purpose to select those events which will best illustrate the workings of the British Naval Soul, and to present them in such a manner and in such an order as will make for the greatest simplicity and force. Naval warfare, viewed in the scattered detail of operations taking place all over the world, is a mightily confusing study; but, if it be analysed and set forth in its essential features, the resultant picture has the clarity and atmosphere of the broad sea horizon itself. There is nothing in naval warfare, as waged by the Royal Navy, of that frightful confusion and grime and clotted horror which has become inseparable from the operations of huge land forces. Sailors live clean lives—except when the poor fellows are coaling ship!—and die clean deaths. They have the inestimable privilege of freedom both in the conception of their plans and in their execution. The broad distinction between land and sea service was put clearly to me once by a Marine officer who had known both. "At sea," he observed, "one at least lives like a gentle-

man until one is dead." It must be very difficult to live or to feel like a gentleman when one is smothered in the mud of Flanders' trenches and has not had a bath for a month.

Although, as I have shown, the Grand Fleet at the outbreak of war was, in effective battle power, of twice the strength of its German opponents, no time was lost in adding largely to that margin of strength. Mines, with which Germany recklessly sowed the seas whenever she could evade the watchful eyes of our cruisers and destroyers, and the elusive and destructively armed submarine, were perils not lightly to be regarded by our great ships. We took the measure of both these dangers in due course, but in the early months of war they caused a vast amount of apprehension. In addition, therefore, to dealing directly with these perils the whole power of our shipyards, gun shops, and armour-rolling mills was turned to the task of increasing the available margin of battle strength so as to anticipate the possibility of serious losses.

And here we had great advantages over Germany. We not only had a far longer and far greater experience, both in designing and constructing ships and guns, but we had a larger number of yards and shops where battleships and battle cruisers could be completed and equipped. Throughout the fourteen years of the peace contest Germany had always been far behind us in design, in speed of construction, and in the volume of output. We built the first Dreadnought in little more than fifteen months—by preparing all the material in advance and taking a good deal from other ships —but our average time of completing the later

models was rather more than two years apiece. The exalted super-battleships occupied about two years and three months before they were in commission. Germany—which so many fearful folk seriously look upon as superhuman in efficiency—never built an ordinary Dreadnought in peace time in less than two years and ten months, and always waited for the chance of copying our designs before she laid one down. It is reasonable to suppose that in the early days of war the German yards and gun shops worked much more rapidly than during the peace competition, but as our own quicker rate of construction was also enormously accelerated it is in the highest degree unlikely that our speed of war output was ever approached by our opponents. We had at the beginning far more skilled labour and, what is more important, far more available skilled labour. Since it was only by slow degrees that we enlisted a vast army for Continental service while Germany had to mobilise the whole of hers at the beginning of hostilities and to call upon the millions of untrained men, the drain upon our manhood was for a long time far less than the drain upon hers. As time went on labour became scarce with us, even for naval work, but it could never have been so scarce as with the Germans when after their immense losses they were driven to employ every possible trained and untrained man with the colours.

We had yet another advantage. In August, 1914, as the result of the far-seeing demands of the British Admiralty we had twice as many great ships under construction in this country as Germany had in the whole of her North Sea

and Baltic yards. This initial advantage was an enormous one, since it meant that for eighteen months Germany could make no effective efforts to catch up with us, and that at the end of that period we should inevitably have in commission an increase in battle strength more than twice as great as hers. The completed new lead thus secured early in 1916, added to the lead obtained before the outbreak of war, then made our position almost impregnable. We were thus free to concentrate much of our attention upon those smaller vessels—the destroyers, patrol boats, steam drifters, fast submarine catchers and motor boats—which were urgently needed to cope with Germany's attacks upon the world's merchant ships.

Early in 1915, six months after the outbreak of War, our shipyards and gun shops had turned out an extraordinary quantity of finished work. There had been some loss in skilled labour through voluntary enlistment in the Army, but the men that were left worked day and night shifts in the most enthusiastic and uncomplaining spirit. The war was still new and the greatness of the Empire's emergency had thrilled all hearts. Some coolness came later, as was inevitable—poor human nature has its cold fits as well as its hot ones—and there was even some successful intriguing by enemy agents in the North, but the great mass of British workmen remained sound at heart. The work went on, more slowly, a little less enthusiastically, but it went on.

During the first six months we completed the great battle cruiser *Tiger*, a sister of the *Lion* with her eight 13.5-inch guns, and the sisters fought together with those others of their class—

the *Queen Mary* and *Princess Royal*—in the Dogger Bank action in January, 1915. We took over and completed two battleships which were building for Turkey and under their new names of *Erin* and *Agincourt* they joined Jellicoe in the north. The second of these great vessels—ravished from the enemy—had fourteen 12-inch guns (set in seven turrets) and the other ten 13.5-inch. We completed two vast super-ships, the *Queen Elizabeth* and another like to her, both with a speed of twenty-five knots and eight 15-inch guns apiece. The battle cruisers, *Indomitable* and *Indefatigable*, speeding home from the Mediterranean, had raised the Battle Cruiser strength in the North Sea to seven fine vessels of which four carried 13.5-inch guns and the three others 12-inch weapons. Even though the *Inflexible* and *Invincible* were still away—they were not yet back from fighting that perfect little action in which the German Pacific Squadron had been destroyed—we had a battle cruiser force against which the rival German vessels could not fight and hope to remain afloat.

After six months, therefore, Jellicoe had received four new battleships—two of them by far the most powerful at that time afloat—and Beatty had been joined by three battle cruisers, one of them quite new. The Grand Fleet was the stronger for six months of work by seven ships.

As compared with our increased strength of seven ships (five quite new), Germany had managed to muster no more than three. She completed two battleships of a speed of twenty and a half knots, each carrying ten 12-inch guns. Neither of these vessels were more powerful than our original Dreadnought class and they were not to be compared with

our King George V's, Orions or Iron Dukes and still less with our Queen Elizabeths. That Germany should, six months after the war began, be completing battleships of a class which with us had been far surpassed fully four years earlier is the best possible illustration of her poverty in naval brains and foresight. Germany had also completed one battle cruiser, the *Derfflinger*, of twenty-seven knots speed and with eight 12-inch guns, which in her turn was not more powerful than our Invincibles of five years earlier date. The *Derfflinger* could no more have stood up to our new *Tiger* than the two battleships just completed by our enemies could have fought for half an hour with our two new Queen Elizabeths. So great indeed had our superiority become as early in the war as the beginning of 1915 that we could without serious risk afford to release two or three battle cruisers for the Mediterranean and to escort the Canadian and Australian contingents across the seas, and to send to the Mediterranean the mighty *Queen Elizabeth* to flesh her maiden guns upon the Turkish defences of the Dardanelles. Ship guns are not designed to fight with land forts, and though the *Queen Elizabeth's* 15-inch shells, weighing over 1,900 lbs. apiece, may not have achieved very much against the defences of the Narrows, their smashing power and wonderful accuracy of control were fully demonstrated.

Inconclusive though it was in actual results, the Dogger Bank action of January, 1915, proved to be most instructive. It showed clearly three things: first, that no decisive action could be fought by the big ships in the southern portion of the North Sea—there was not sufficient room to

complete the destruction of the enemy. Secondly, it demonstrated the overwhelming power of the larger gun and the heavier shell. Thanks to the skill of the Navy's engineering staffs it was also found that the actual speed of our battle cruisers was quite a knot faster than their designed speed, and since no similar advance in speed was noticeable in the case of the fleeing German cruisers it could be concluded that the training of our engineers was fully as superior to theirs as was unquestionably the training of our long-service seamen and gunners superior to that of their short-service crews. As the fleets grew larger our superiority in personnel tended to become more marked. We had an almost unlimited maritime population upon which to draw for the few thousands whom we needed—before the war the professional Navy was almost wholly recruited from the seaboards of the South of England—we had still as our reserves the east and west coasts of England and Scotland. But Germany, even before the war, could not man her fleets from her scanty resources of men from her seaboards, and more and more had to depend upon partially trained landsmen. If one adds to this initial disadvantage in the quality of the German sea recruits, that other disadvantage of the cooping up of her fleets—sea training can only be acquired fully upon the open seas—while ours were continually at work, patrolling, cruising, practising gunnery, and so on, it will be seen that on the one side the personal efficiency of officers and men, upon which the value of machines wholly depends, tended continually to advance, while upon the German side it tended as continually to recede. It was the old story. Nelson's sea-

worn fleet, though actually smaller in numbers and weaker in guns than those of the French and Spaniards at Trafalgar, was so infinitely superior to its opponents in trained officers and men that the result of the battle was never for a moment in doubt.

At the time of the Dogger Bank action, which confirmed our Navy in its growing conviction that Speed and Power of guns were of supreme importance, the Germans had no guns afloat larger in calibre than 12-inch and seven of the ships in their first line were armed with weapons of 11 inches. They then mustered in all twenty big ships which they could place in the battle line against our available thirty-two, and of their twenty not more than thirteen were of a class comparable even with our older Dreadnoughts. They had nothing to touch our twelve Orions, King Georges, Iron Dukes, all with 13.5-inch guns, and upon a supreme eminence by themselves stood the two new Queen Elizabeths which, if need be, could have disposed of any half-dozen of the weaker German battleships. In the Jutland Battle four Queen Elizabeths—*Barham*, *Warspite*, *Valiant* and *Malaya*—fought for an hour and more the whole High Seas Fleet. It is no wonder, then, that the Germans did not come out far enough for Jellicoe to get at them. And yet there were silly people ashore who still prattled about the inactivity of the Royal Navy and asked one another "what it was doing."

There is a good story told of the scorn of the professional seamen afloat for the querulous civilians ashore. When the *Lion* was summoned to lead the battle cruisers in the Dogger Bank

action she was lying in the Forth undergoing some slight repairs. As she got up steam a gang of dockyard mateys, at work upon her, pleaded anxiously to be put ashore. They had no stomach for a battle. But there was no time to worry about their feelings; they were carried into action with the ship, and when the shots began to fly they were contemptuously assured by the grizzled old sea dogs, that they were in for the time of their lives. "You wanted to know," said they, "what the b——y Navy's doing and now you're going to see."

While the power of the Grand Fleet dominated the war at sea, some thirty supply ships and transports safely crossed the English Channel every day, and troops poured into Britain and France from every part of our wide-flung Empire. But for that silent, brooding, ever-expanding Grand Fleet, watching over the world's seas from its eyries on the Scottish coast, not a man or a gun or a pound of stores could have been sent to France, not a man could have been moved from India or Australia, Canada or New Zealand. But for that "idle" Grand Fleet the war would have been over and Germany victorious before the summer and autumn of 1914 had passed into winter. During the war sea power, as always in naval history, has depended absolutely upon the power in men, in ships, and in guns of the first battle line.

At the beginning of 1915, in addition to the completed ships which I have already mentioned, Great Britain had under construction three additional Queen Elizabeths—*Malaya*, *Barham*, and *Valiant*—all of twenty-five knot speed and carrying eight 15-inch guns apiece. She had also on

the stocks in various stages of growth five Royal Sovereign Battleships designed for very heavy armour, with a speed of from twenty-one to twenty-two knots, and to be equipped with eight 15-inch guns each.

. . . . .

It will be seen how completely during the war the Royal Navy had "gone nap" on the ever faster ship and the ever bigger gun. Calculations might be partially upset by weather and visibility —as they were in the Jutland Battle—but even under the worst conditions speed and gun power came triumphantly by their own. Our fast and powerful battle cruisers, and our four fast and more powerful Queen Elizabeths—the name ship was not present—could not on that day of low visibility choose their most effective ranges, but the speed and power of the battle cruisers enabled them to outflank the enemy while the speed and hitting power of the *Barham*, *Valiant*, *Warspite* and *Malaya* held up the whole of the German High Seas Fleet until Jellicoe with his overwhelming squadrons could come to their support. Even under the worst conditions of light, speed and gun power had fully justified themselves.

Let us for a moment consider what are the advantages and disadvantages of the bigger and bigger gun; the advantages of speed will be obvious to all. To take first the disadvantages. Big guns mean weight, and weight is inconsistent with speed. The bigger the gun, the heavier it is, the heavier its mountings, its turrets, and its ammunition. Therefore in order that weight may

be kept down and high speed attained, the ships which carry big guns must carry fewer guns than those which are more lightly armed. The Orions, K.G. Fives, and Iron Dukes each bear ten 13.5-inch guns within their turrets, but the battle cruisers of which the *Lion* is the flagship, built for speed, can carry no more than eight. The Queen Elizabeth battleships, designed to carry 15-inch guns and to have a speed of twenty-five knots, mount eight guns only against the ten of the earlier and more lightly armed super-Dreadnoughts. Speed and weight being inconsistent, increase in speed and increase in size of guns can only be reconciled by reducing the number of guns carried. The fewer the guns carried, the fewer the salvos that can be fired at an enemy during a fixed time even if the rate of fire of the big guns can be kept so high as that of the smaller ones. When opposing ships are moving fast upon divergent courses, ranges are continually varying and the difficulty of making effective hits is very great indeed. The elaboration of checks and controls, which are among the most cherished of naval gunnery secrets, are designed to increase the proportion of hits to misses which must always be small even when the light is most favourable. If the heavy gun were no more accurate than the light one, then the small number of guns carried and the reduced number of salvos, would probably annul the benefit derived from the greater smashing power of the heavier shell when it did hit an enemy. The ever-expanding gun has, therefore, disadvantages, notable disadvantages, but as we shall see they are far more than outweighed by its great and conspicuous merits.

The first overwhelming advantage of the big gun is the gain in accuracy. It is far more accurate than the lighter one. As the fighting range increases so does the elevation of a gun, needed to reach an object within the visible limits of the horizon, sensibly increase. But the bigger the gun and the heavier its shell, the flatter becomes its trajectory. And a flat trajectory—low elevation—means not only more accurate shooting, but a larger danger zone for an enemy ship. At 24,000 yards (twelve sea miles) a 12-inch shell is falling very steeply and can rarely be pumped upon an enemy's deck, but a 15-inch shell is still travelling upon a fairly flat path which makes it effective against the sides and upper works of a ship as well as against its deck. The 15-inch shell thus has the bigger mark. It also suffers less from deflection and, what is more important, maintains its speed for a much longer time than a lighter shell. Increased weight means increased momentum. When the 15-inch shell gets home upon its bigger mark at a long range it has still speed and weight (momentum) with which to penetrate protective armour. When it does hit and penetrate there is no comparison in destructiveness between the effect of a 15-inch shell and one of twelve inches. The larger shell is nearly two and a half times as heavy as the smaller one (1,960 lbs. against 850), and the power of the bursting charge of the big shell is more than six times that of the smaller one. Far-distant ships, big ships, can be destroyed by 15-inch shells when, even if occasionally hit by one of twelve inches, they would be little more than peppered. The big gun therefore gives to our Navy a larger mark, greater accuracy arising

from the lower trajectory, and far greater destructive hitting power in comparison with the lighter guns carried by most of the German battleships.

But the advantages of the big gun do not end here. Gunnery, in spite of all its elaboration of checks and controls, is largely a matter of trial and error. All that the checks and controls are designed to do is to reduce the proportion of errors; they cannot by themselves ensure accurate shooting. Accuracy is obtained through correcting the errors by actual observation of the results of shots. This is called "spotting." When shells are seen to fall too short, or too far, or too much to one side or the other, the error in direction or elevation is at once corrected. But everything depends upon exact meticulous spotting, an almost incredibly difficult matter at the long ranges of modern sea fighting. Imagine oneself looking for the splash of a shell, bursting on contact with the sea ten or more miles away, and estimating just how far that splash is short or over or to one side of the object aimed at. It will be obvious to anyone that the position of a big splash can be gauged more surely than that of a small one, and that the huge splash of the big shell, which sends up a column of water hundreds of feet high, can be seen and placed by spotting officers who would be quite baffled if they were observing shots from 12-inch weapons. In this respect also, that of spotting results, the big gun with its big shell, greatly assists the elimination of inevitable errors and increases the proportion of effective hits to misses. If then we get from bigger guns a higher proportion of hits, and a much greater effectiveness from those hits, then the bigger gun has

paid a handsome dividend on its cost and has more than compensated us for the reduction in its numbers. Where the useful limit will be reached one cannot say, nothing but experience in war can decide, but the visible horizon being limited to about fifteen sea miles, there must come a stage in gun expansion when increase in size, accuracy, and destructiveness will cease to compensate for smallness of numbers. And the limit will be more quickly reached when during an action the light does not allow the big gun to use its accuracy at longer ranges to the fullest advantage.

. . . . .

Although one's attention is apt to be absorbed by the great ships of the first battle line, the ultimate Fount of naval Power, a Navy which built only vast battleships and cruisers would be quite unable to control the seas. A navy's daily work does not consist of battles. For the main purposes of watching the seas, hunting submarines, blockading an enemy, and guarding the communications of ourselves and our Allies, and also for protecting our big ships against submarines and other mosquito attacks, we needed vast numbers of light cruisers, patrol boats, destroyers, armed merchant cruisers, steam drifters and so on, and these had to be built or adapted with as great an energy as that devoted to turning out the monsters of the first battle line. The construction of light cruisers and destroyers—the cavalry of the seas—kept pace during 1915 and 1916 with that of the big fighting ships, while the turning out of the light fast craft essential for

hunting down enemy submarines, far surpassed in speed and other building operations. At the beginning of the war we had 270 light mosquito vessels; at the end of 1917 we had 3,500!

Nothing like the tremendous activity in warship building during 1915 has ever been seen in our country. Mercantile building was to a large extent suspended, labour was both scarce and dear, builders could not complete commercial contracts at the prices named in them, the great yards became "controlled establishments" with priority claims both for labour and material. Consequently every yard which could add to the Navy's strength, whether in super-battleships or cruisers, destroyers or in the humble mine sweeper, were put on to war work. The Clyde, typical of the ship-building rivers, was a forest of scaffolding poles from Fairfield to Greenock within which huge rusty hulls—to the unaccustomed eye very unlike new vessels—grew from day to day in the open almost with the speed of mushrooms. A trip down the teeming river became one of the sights of the city on the Clyde and, though precautions were taken to exclude aliens, the Germans must have known with some approach to accuracy the numbers and nature of the craft which were under construction. What was going on in the Clyde during that year of supreme activity, when naval brains were unhampered by Parliament or the Treasury, was also going on in the Tyne, at Barrow and Birkenhead, in the Royal Dockyards—everywhere day and night the Navy was growing at a speed fully three times as great as in any year in our history.

. . . . .

Twenty-two months after war broke out, in May of 1916, Jellicoe's battle line had been strengthened during the previous twelve months by the addition of no less than seven great vessels. Three more Queen Elizabeths were finished and so were three Royal Sovereigns, and in addition a fine battleship, which had been building in England for Brazil, was taken over and completed. She was named the *Canada*, had twenty-three knots of speed, and was designed to carry ten 14-inch guns. There were thus available in the North Sea, allowing for occasional absences, from thirty-eight to forty-two great ships of the battle line, of which no fewer than eight carried 15-inch guns of the very latest design. This huge piling up of strength was essential not only to provide against possible losses but to ensure that, in spite of all accidents, an immense preponderance of naval power would always be available should Germany venture to put her fortunes to the hazard of battle. And accidents did occur. The coast lights had all been extinguished and ships at sea cruising at night were almost buried in darkness. As time went on it became more and more certain that a Battle of the Giants could have but one result.

I have now carried the story of naval expansion down to the time of the Jutland Battle—May 31st, 1916—and will show by how much our paper strength had increased between August 4th, 1914, and that date, and how much of that strength was available when the call for battle rang out. It happened that none of our battle cruisers was away upon overseas enterprises, so that we were in good circumstances to meet the call. There

had been added to the Fleets one battle cruiser, the *Tiger*, with 13.5-inch guns, five Queen Elizabeth battleships with 15-inch guns, three Royal Sovereign battleships with 15-inch guns (*Royal Sovereign*, *Royal Oak* and *Revenge*), the *Erin* battleship with 13.5-inch guns, the *Canada* battleship with 14-inch guns, and the *Agincourt* battleship with fourteen 12-inch guns. At the beginning of the war our total strength in battleships and battle cruisers of the Dreadnought and later more powerful types was thirty-one, so that on May 31st we had in and near the North Sea a full paper total of forty-two ships of the battle line.

But the Royal Navy which is always at work upon the open seas can never have at any one moment its whole force available for battle. The squadrons composing the Fleets were, however, exceedingly powerful, far more than sufficient for the complete destruction of the Germans had they dared to fight out the action. As the battle was fought the main burden fell upon thirteen only of our ships—Beatty's four Cat battle cruisers assisted by the *New Zealand* and *Indefatigable*, Hood's three battle cruisers of the Invincible class, and Evan-Thomas's four Queen Elizabeth battleships. Jellicoe's available main Fleet of twenty-five battleships, including two Royal Sovereigns with 15-inch guns, the *Canada* with 14-inch guns, and twelve Orions, K.G. Fives and Iron Dukes with 13.5-inch guns, which was robbed of its fought-out battle by the enemy's skilful withdrawal, was almost sufficient by itself to have eaten up the German High Seas Fleet.

During the battle we lost the *Queen Mary* with 13.5-inch guns, and the *Invincible* and *Inde-*

fatigable with 12-inch guns, all of which were battle cruisers. So that after the action our total battle cruiser strength had declined from ten to seven, while our battleship strength was unimpaired.

. . . . .

It is not easy to be quite sure of what the Germans had managed to do during those twenty-two months of war. I have given them credit for completing every ship which it was possible for them to complete. They were too fully occupied with building submarines to attack our merchant ships, too fully occupied with guns and shells for land fighting, and too much hampered in regard to many essential materials by our blockade, to be able to effect more than the best possible. Rumour from time to time credited them with the construction of "surprise" ships carrying 17-inch guns, but nothing unexpected was revealed when the clash of Fleets came on May 31st, 1916. Huge new battleships and huge new guns take us at the very least fifteen months to complete at full war pressure—most of them nearer two years—and the German rate of construction, even when unhampered by a blockade and the calling to the army of all available men, has always been much slower than ours. The British Admiralty does not work in the dark and doubtless knew fully what the Germans were doing.

If we credit the Germans with their best possible they might have added, by May, 1916, four battleships and two battle cruisers to their High Seas Fleet as it existed early in 1915. One of the battleships was the *Salamis,* which was building

at Stettin for Greece when the war broke out. She was designed for speed of twenty-three knots, and to carry ten 14-inch guns. The other three battleships were copies of our Queen Elizabeths, though slower by about four knots. They were to have been equipped with eight 15-inch guns, though Germany had not before the war managed to make any naval guns larger than 12-inch. The battle cruisers (*Hindenburg* and *Lützow*) were vessels of twenty-seven knots with eight 12-inch guns, not to be compared with our Cats and no better than our comparatively old class of Invincibles.

The story of the *Salamis* and its 14-inch guns forms a very precious piece of war history. The guns for this Greek battleship had been ordered in America, a country which has specialised in guns of that calibre. But when Germany took over the ship the guns had not been delivered at Stettin, and never were delivered. They had quite another destination and employment. Our Admiralty interposed, in its grimly humorous way, bought the guns in America, brought them over to this country, and used the weapons intended for the *Salamis* to bombard the Germans at Zeebrugge and the Turks in Gallipoli. One may speculate as to which potentate was the more irritated by this piece of poetic justice—the Kaiser in Berlin or his brother-in-law "Tino" in Athens.

At their utmost, therefore, the Germans could not have added more than five vessels to their first line (they had lost one battle cruiser), thus raising it at the utmost to twenty-five battleships and cruisers, as compared with our maximum of forty-two much more powerful and faster ships.

Four of their battleships were the obsolete Nassaus with twelve 11-inch guns and two of their battle cruisers (*Moltke* and *Seydlitz*) were also armed with 11-inch guns. If a successful fight with our Grand Fleet was hopeless in August, 1914, it was still more hopeless in May, 1916. We had not doubled our lead in actual numbers but had much more than doubled it in speed and power of the vessels available for a battle in the North Sea. In gun power we had nearly twice Germany's strength at the beginning; we had not far from three times her effective strength by the end of May of 1916. It is indeed probable that Germany was not so strong in big ships and guns as I have here reckoned. She did not produce so many in the Jutland Battle. I can account for five battle cruisers and sixteen battleships (excluding pre-Dreadnoughts) making twenty-one in all. I have allowed her, however, the best possible, but long before the year 1916 it must have been brought bitterly home to the German Sea Command that by no device of labour, thought, and machinery could they produce great ships to range in battle with ours. We had progressed from strength to strength at so dazzling a speed that we could not possibly be overtaken. Had not the hare gone to sleep, the tortoise could never have come up with it—and the British hare had no intention of sleeping to oblige the German tortoise. There is every indication that Germany soon gave up the contest in battleships and put her faith in super-submarines, and in Zeppelins, the one to scout and raid, and the other to sink merchant vessels and so between them either to starve or terrify England into seeking an end of the war.

CHAPTER XI

THE CRUISE OF THE "GLASGOW"

PART I.—RIO TO CORONEL

(July 27th to Nov. 1st, 1914)

EVERYONE has heard of the light cruiser *Glasgow*, how she fought at Coronel, and then escaped, and is now the sole survivor among the warships which then represented Great Britain and Germany; how she fought again off the Falkland Islands, and with the aid of the *Cornwall* sank the *Leipzig*; how after many days of weary search she discovered the *Dresden* in shelter at Juan Fernandez, and with the *Kent* finally brought that German cruiser to a last account. These things are known. But of her other movements and adventures between the declaration of war in August of 1914 and that final spectacular scene in Cumberland Bay, Juan Fernandez, upon March 14th, 1915, nothing has been written. It is a very interesting story, and I propose to write it now. I will relate how she began her fighting career as the forlorn solitary representative of English sea power in the South Atlantic, and how by gradual stages, as if endowed with some compelling power of magnetic attraction, she became the focus of a British and German naval concentration which at last extended over

half the world. This scrap of a fast light cruiser, of 4,800 tons, in appearance very much like a large torpedo-boat destroyer, with her complement of 370 men, worthily played her part in the Empire's work, which is less the fighting of great battles than the sleepless policing of the seas. The battleships and battle cruisers are the fount of power; they by their fighting might hold the command of the seas, but the Navy's daily work in the outer oceans is done, not by huge ships of the line, but by light cruisers, such as the *Glasgow*, of which at the outbreak of the war we had far too few for our needs.

In July, 1914, the *Glasgow* was the sole representative of British sea power upon the Atlantic coast of South America. She had the charge of our interests from a point some 400 miles north of Rio, right down to the Falkland Islands in the cold south. She was a modern vessel of 4,800 tons, first commissioned in 1911 by Captain Marcus Hill, and again in September, 1912, by Captain John Luce, and the officers and men who formed her company in July nearly four years ago, when the shadow of war hung over the world. She was well equipped to range over the thousands of miles of sea of which she was the solitary guardian. Her turbine engines, driving four screws, could propel her at a speed exceeding twenty-six knots (over thirty miles an hour) when her furnaces were fed with coal and oil; and with her two 6-inch and ten 4-inch guns of new pattern she was more than a match for any German light cruiser which might have been sent against her.

Upon July 27th, 1914, while lying at Rio de Janeiro her captain received the first intimation

that the strain in Europe might result in war between England and Germany. Upon July 29th the warning became more urgent, and upon July 31st the activity of the German merchant ships in the harbour showed that they also had been notified of the imminence of hostilities. They loaded coal and stores into certain selected vessels to their utmost capacity, and clearly purposed to employ them as supply ships for any of their cruisers which might be sent to the South Atlantic. At that time there were, as a matter of fact, no German cruisers nearer than the east coast of Mexico. The *Karlsruhe* had just come out to relieve the *Dresden*, which had been conveying refugees of the Mexican Revolution to Kingston, Jamaica. Thence she sailed for Haiti, met there the *Karlsruhe*, and made the exchange of captains on July 27th. Both these cruisers were ordered to remain, but a third German cruiser in Mexican waters, the *Strassburg*, rushed away for home and safely got back to Germany before war was declared on August 4th. Thus the *Dresden* and *Karlsruhe* were left, and over against them in the West Indies lay Rear-Admiral Cradock with four "County" cruisers—*Suffolk*, *Essex*, *Lancaster*, and *Berwick* (sisters of the *Monmouth*)—and the fast cruiser *Bristol*, a sister of the *Glasgow*. Though the *Glasgow*, lying alone at Rio, had many anxieties —chiefly at first turning upon that question of supply which governs the movements of war ships in the outer seas—she had no reason to expect an immediate descent of the *Dresden* and *Karlsruhe* from the north. Cradock could look after them if they had not the good luck to evade his attentions. Upon August 1st, the *Glasgow* was cleared for

THE CRUISE OF THE "GLASGOW."

war, and all luxuries and superfluities, all those things which make life tolerable in a small cruiser, were ruthlessly cast forth and put into store at Rio. She was well supplied with provisions and ammunition, but coal, as it always is, was an urgent need—not only coal for the immediate present, but for the indefinite future. For immediate necessities the *Glasgow* bought up the cargo of a British collier in Rio, and ordered her captain to follow the cruiser when she sallied forth. Upon August 3rd, the warnings from home became definite, the *Glasgow* coaled and took in oil till her bunkers were bursting, made arrangements with the English authorities in Rio for the transmission of telegrams to the secret base which she proposed to establish, and late in the evening of August 4th, crept out of Rio in the darkness with all lights out. During that fourth day of August the passing minutes seemed to stretch into years. The anchorage where the *Glasgow* lay was in the outer harbour, and she was continually passed by German merchant steamers crowding in to seek the security of a neutral port. War was very near.

Captain Luce had already selected a secret base, where he hoped to be able to coal in shelter outside territorial waters. His collier had been ordered to follow as soon as permitted, and he headed off to inspect the barren rocks, uninhabited except by a lighthouse-keeper, which were to be his future link with home. His luck held, for the first ship he encountered was a big English steamer bound for Rio with coal for the Brazilian railways. In order to be upon the safe side, he commandeered this collier also, and made her attend him to his base. There, to his relief, he found that shelter

from the surf could be found, and that it was possible to use the desolate spot as a coaling base and keep the supply ships outside territorial waters. He used it then and afterwards; so did the other cruisers, *Good Hope* and *Monmouth*, which came out to him, so also did that large squadron months later which made of this place a rendezvous and an essential storehouse on the journey to the Falklands and to the end of von Spee. We were always most careful to keep on the right side of the Law.

I will not give to this base of the *Glasgow* its true name; let us call it the Pirates' Lair, and restore to it the romantic flavour of irresponsible buccaneering which I do not doubt that it enjoyed a century or so earlier. In the *Glasgow's* day it mounted a lighthouse and an exceedingly inquisitive keeper whom German Junkers would have terrorised, but whom the kindly English, themselves to some extent trespassers, left unharmed to the enjoyment of his curiosity. He, lucky man, did not know that there was a war on.

Realise, if you can, the feelings of the officers and men of this small English cruiser lying isolated from the world in her Pirates' Lair. Their improvised base, not far from the main trade routes, might at any moment have been discovered—as indeed it was before very long; it was the territory of a neutral country, a country most friendly then and afterwards, but bound to observe its declaration of neutrality. They knew that coal and store ships from England would be sent out, but did not know whether they would arrive. They were in wireless touch with the British representatives at Rio, Pernambuco, and Montevideo,

but authentic news came in scraps intermingled with the wildest rumour. They, or rather their captain, had to sort the grains of essential fact from the chaff of fiction. As the month of August unfolded, their news of the war came chiefly from German wireless, and those of us who lived through and remember those early weeks of war also remember that the news from enemy sources had no cheerful sound. For some weeks they were free from anxiety for supplies, provided that their base could be retained, yet the future was blank. I do not think that they worried overmuch; the worst time they had lived through was during those few days in Rio before war broke out, and those days immediately afterwards, when they were seeking those corners of their Lair least exposed to gales and surf. Very often coaling was impossible; more often it was both difficult and dangerous.

It may seem strange that for many weeks—until well into September—the *Glasgow* heard nothing of Cradock and his West Indies Squadron. Yet it was so. Cradock in the *Suffolk* had on August 5th met the *Karlsruhe* coaling at sea, and signalled to the fast *Bristol* to look after her. The *Bristol* got upon the chase and fired a shot or two, but, speedy though she was, the *Karlsruhe* ran away from her and was seen no more and heard of no more until she began her ravages upon steamers to the South of Pernambuco. Cradock, thinking she had gone north, and moreover having charge of the whole North Atlantic trade on its western side, became farther and farther separated from the *Glasgow*, and even went so far away as Halifax. Meanwhile the *Dresden* slipped down and entered

the *Glasgow's* sea area on August 9th, though her movements were not yet known. On the 13th Captain Luce learned that the *Monmouth* was coming out to him under a captain who was his junior, so that upon himself would still rest the responsibility for the South Atlantic. He was now beginning to get some news upon which he could act, and already suspected that the *Dresden* or the *Karlsruhe*, or both, had broken away for the south. He could hear the Telefunken wireless calls of the *Dresden* to her attendant colliers from somewhere in the north a thousand miles away. During his cruises from the Lair he was always on the look out for her, and once, on the 16th, thought that he had her under his guns. But the warship which he had sighted proved to be a Brazilian, and the thirst of the *Glasgow's* company for battle went for a while unslaked. The *Dresden*, for which the *Glasgow* was searching, had coaled at the Rocas Islands, there met the *Baden*, a collier of twelve knots, carrying 5,000 tons of coal, and together the two vessels made for the south and remained together until after the Falkland Islands action had been fought. The *Dresden* picked up a second collier, the *Preussen*, and set her course for the small barren Trinidad Island, another old Pirates' Lair some 500 miles from that of the *Glasgow*, at which she in her turn established a temporary base. At one moment the *Dresden* and *Glasgow* were not far apart, the wireless calls sounded near, yet they did not meet. This was on the 18th, when the *Glasgow* was coaling at her base, and two days before she went north to join up with the *Monmouth* off Pernambuco.

This journey to the north coincided in time with

the *Dresden's* passage to Trinidad Island, so that by the 20th the two cruisers were again a thousand miles apart, but with their positions reversed. While the *Glasgow* had been going up, the *Dresden* had been going south and east. For awhile we will leave the *Dresden*, which after spending two days under the lee of Trinidad Island went on her way to the south, drawing farther and farther away from the *Glasgow* and more and more out of our picture. Her movements were from time to time revealed by captures of British ships, of which the crews were sent ashore. Her captain, Lüdecke, at no time made a systematic business of preying upon merchant traffic and upon him rests no charge of inhumanity. It may be that commerce raiding and murder did not please him; it may be that he was under orders to make his way at the leisurely gait of his collier *Baden*—he left the *Preussen* behind at Trinidad Island—towards the Chilian coast, and the ultimate meeting with von Spee.

At sea off Pernambuco on August 20th, the *Glasgow* met the *Monmouth*, which had been commissioned on August 4th, mainly with naval reservists, and hastily despatched to the South Atlantic. Rumour still pointed to the presence of the *Dresden* in the vicinity, and it seemed likely that she might meditate an attack upon our merchant shipping in the waters afterwards greatly favoured by the *Karlsruhe*. The two English cruisers remained in the north for a week, hearing much German wireless, which was that of the *Karlsruhe*, and not of the *Dresden*. On the night of the 27th the armed liner *Otranto* heralded her approach, and on the following day the *Glasgow*

met her at the Rocas Islands. Captain Luce had now progressed from the command of one cruiser to the control of quite a squadron, three ships. Already the concentration about the small form of the *Glasgow* had begun.

The bigness of the sea and the difficulty of finding single vessels, though one may be equipped with all the aids of cable and wireless telegraphy, will begin to be realised. I have told how the *Dresden* passed the *Glasgow* on the 18th. She had been at the Rocas Islands on the 14th. The *Karlsruhe*, too, had been at the Rocas Islands on the 17th. She, also, had come south, though Cradock, with his squadron, was hunting for her in the north up to the far latitudes of Halifax. The two German cruisers, which had seemed so far away from the *Glasgow* when she was at Rio calculating possibilities on August 1st, had both evaded the West Indies squadron and penetrated into her own slenderly guarded waters.

Upon August 30th the *Glasgow*, *Monmouth*, and *Otranto* were back at their Pirates' Lair, which they could not leave for long, since it formed their rather precarious base of supply, and there they learned that the *Dresden* had sunk the British steamer *Holmwood* far to the south off Rio Grande do Sul and must be looked after at once, since she might have it in mind to raid our big shipping lines with the River Plate. Here on the 31st they learned also of the action in the Heligoland Bight, and of the German invasion of France, and of the retreat from Mons. The land war seemed very far off, but very ominous to those Keepers of the South Atlantic in their borrowed base upon a foreign shore thousands of miles away.

My readers, especially those who are the more thoughtful, may ask how the *Glasgow* was able with a clear conscience to hie away to the north and leave during all those weeks our big shipping trade to Brazil, Uruguay, and the Argentine uncovered from the raiding exploits of all the German liners lying there which might have issued forth as armed commerce raiders. The answer is that none of the German liners had any guns. The spectre of concealed guns which might upon the outbreak of war be mounted, proved to be baseless. The German liners had no guns, not even the *Cap Trafalgar*, sunk later, September 14th, off Trinidad Island by the *Carmania*. The *Cap Trafalgar's* guns came from the small German gunboat *Eber*, which had arranged a meeting with her at this unofficial German base. The project of arming the *Cap Trafalgar* was quite a smart one, but, unfortunately for her, the first use to which she put her borrowed weapons was the last, and she went down in one of the most spirited fights of the whole war. The *Carmania* had come down from the north in the train of Rear-Admiral Cradock.

At the beginning of September the *Glasgow* and the *Monmouth* shifted down south, in the hope of catching the *Dresden* at work off the River Plate. There they arrived on the 8th, but found no prey, though rumours were many, and unrewarded searches as many. The *Otranto* came down to join them, and down also came the news that Cradock in his new flagship, the *Good Hope*, sent out to him from England, was also coming to take charge of the operations. Upon September 11th the *Dresden* was reported to be far down towards

the Straits of Magellan and for the time out of reach, so the *Glasgow's* squadron returned to its northern Lair and the junction with the *Good Hope*. From Cradock the officers learned that the *Cornwall* and *Bristol*, with the *Carmania* and *Macedonia*, had arrived on the station, and that the old battleship *Canopus* was coming out. At the beginning of the war there had been one ship only in the South Atlantic, the *Glasgow;* now there were no fewer than five cruisers and three armed liners, and a battleship was on the way. One ship had grown into eight, was about to grow into nine, and before long was destined to become the focus of the most interesting concentration of the whole war.

We have now reached September 18th, by which date the *Dresden* was far off towards the Pacific. She reached an old port of refuge for whalers near Cape Horn, named Orange Bay, on the 5th, and rested there till the 16th. At Punta Arenas she had picked up another collier, the *Santa Isabel*, and, accompanied by her pair of supply vessels passed slowly round the Horn. At the western end of the Magellan Straits she met with the Pacific liner *Ortega*, which, though fired upon and called to stop, pluckily bolted into a badly charted channel and conveyed the news of the *Dresden's* movements to the English squadron, which for awhile had lost all trace of her.

It was not yet clear to Cradock, who was now in command of the Southern Squadron—to distinguish it from the Northern Squadron, which presently consisted of the armoured cruiser *Carnarvon* (Rear-Admiral Stoddart), the *Defence*, the *Cornwall*, the *Kent*, the *Bristol*, and the armed

liner *Macedonia*—it was not yet clear that the *Dresden* was bound for the Pacific, and a rendezvous with von Spee. It seemed more probable that her intention was to prey upon shipping off the Straits of Magellan. In order to meet the danger, he set off with the *Good Hope*, *Monmouth*, *Glasgow*, and the armed liner *Otranto* to operate in the far south, employing the Falkland Islands as his base. The *Glasgow's* Lair of the north now remained for the use of Stoddart's squadron.

In the light of after-events one cannot but feel regret that the old battleship *Canopus* was attached to the Southern Squadron—Cradock's—instead of the armoured cruiser *Defence*, a much more useful if less powerfully armed vessel. The *Defence* was comparatively new, completed in 1908, had a speed of some twenty-one to twenty-two knots, and was more powerful than either the *Scharnhorst* or the *Gneisenau*. The three sisters, *Defence*, *Minotaur*, and *Shannon*, had indeed been laid down as replies to the building of the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, and carried four 9.2-inch guns and ten 7.5-inch as against the eight 8.2-inch and six 6-inch guns of the German cruisers.

I have reached a point in my narrative when it becomes necessary to take up the story from the German side, and to indicate how it came about that five cruisers, which at the beginning of the war were widely scattered, became concentrated into the fine hard-fighting squadron which met Cradock at Coronel. The permanent base of the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* was Tsing-tau in China, but it happened that at the end of July, 1914, they were more than 2,000 miles away in the Caroline Islands. The light cruisers *Nürnberg* and *Leipzig*

were upon the western coast of Mexico, and, as I have already told, the *Dresden* was off the eastern coast of Mexico. The *Emden*, which does not concern us, was at Tsing-tau. The *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* were kept out of China waters by the Japanese fleets and hunted for and chased to Fiji by the Australian Unit. On September 22nd von Spee bombarded Tahiti, in the Society Islands, at the moment when the *Dresden*, having safely passed through the Atlantic, was creeping up the Chilian coast and the *Nürnberg* and *Leipzig* were coming down from the north. All the German vessels had been ordered to concentrate at Easter Island, a small remote convict settlement belonging to Chili and lost in the Pacific far out (2,800 miles) to the west of Valparaiso.

While, therefore, Cradock and his Southern Squadron were steering for the Falkland Islands to make of it a base for their search for the *Dresden*, von Spee's cruisers were slowly concentrating upon Easter Island. There was no coal at the Falklands—they produce nothing except sheep and the most abominable weather on earth—but it was easy for us to direct colliers thither, and to transform the Islands into a base of supplies. The Germans had a far more difficult task. All through the operations which I am describing, and have still to describe, we were possessed of three great advantages. We had the coal, we had the freedom of communications given by ocean cables and wireless, and we had the sympathy of all those South American neutrals with whom we had to deal. Admiral von Spee and his ships were all through in great difficulties for coal, and would have failed entirely unless the German ships

at South American ports had run big risks to seek out and supply him. He was to a large extent cut off from the outside world, for he had no cables, and received little information or assistance from home. The slowness of his movements, both before and after Coronel, may chiefly be explained through his lack of supplies and his ignorance of where we were or of what we were about to do.

It is comparatively easy for me now to plot out the movements of the English and German vessels, and to set forth their relative positions at any date. But when the movements were actually in progress the admirals and captains on both sides were very much in the dark. Now and then would come a ray of light which enabled their imagination and judgment to work. Thus the report from the *Ortega* that she had encountered the *Dresden* with her two colliers at the Pacific entrance of the Magellan Straits showed that she might be bound for some German rendezvous in the Pacific Ocean. A day or two later came word that the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* had bombarded Tahiti, and that these two powerful cruisers, which had seemed to be so remote from the concern of the South Atlantic Squadron, were already half-way across the wide Pacific, apparently bound for Chili. It was also, of course, known that the *Leipzig* and *Nürnberg* were on the west coast of Mexico to the north. Any one who will take a chart of the Pacific and note the positions towards the end of September of von Spee, the *Dresden*, and the *Nürnberg* and *Leipzig*, will see that the lonely dot marked as Easter Island was pretty nearly the only spot in the vast stretch of water towards which these scattered units could possibly be converging. At

THE PACIFIC: VON SPEE'S CONCENTRATION.

least so it seemed at the time, and, in fact, proved to be the case. The *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* reached Easter Island early in October, the *Nürnberg* turned up on the 12th, and later upon the same day the *Dresden* arrived with her faithful collier the *Baden*. Upon the 14th down came the *Leipzig* accompanied by colliers carrying 3,000 tons of coal. The German concentration was complete; it had been carried through with very considerable skill aided by no less considerable luck. The few inhabitants of the lonely Easter Island, remote from trade routes, cables, and newspapers, regarded the German squadron with complete indifference. They had heard nothing of the world war, and were not interested in foreign warships. The island is rich in archæological remains. There happened to be upon it a British scientific expedition, but, busied over the relics of the past, the single-minded men of science did not take the trouble to cross the island to look at the German ships. They also were happy in their lack of knowledge that a war was on.

I have anticipated events a little in order to make clear what was happening on the other side of the great spur of South America while Admiral Stoddart's squadron was taking charge of the Brazilian, Uruguayan, and upper Argentine coasts, and Admiral Cradock, with the *Good Hope*, *Glasgow*, *Monmouth*, and *Otranto*—followed by the battleship *Canopus*—were pressing to the south after the *Dresden*. Stoddart's little lot had been swept up from regions remote from their present concentration. The *Carnarvon* had come from St. Vincent, the *Defence* from the Mediterranean, where she had been Troubridge's flagship in the

early days of the war; the *Kent* had been sent out from England, and the *Cornwall* summoned from the West Coast of Africa. The *Bristol*, as we know, was from the West Indies and her fruitless hunt for the elusive *Karlsruhe*. The South Atlantic was now in possession of two considerable British squadrons, although two months earlier there had been nothing of ours carrying guns except the little *Glasgow*.

After the news arrived from the *Ortega* about the *Dresden's* movements, Cradock took his ships down to Punta Arenas, and thence across to Port Stanley, in the Falkland Islands, where he was joined by the *Canopus*, a slow old ship of some thirteen to fourteen knots, which had straggled down to him. I have never been able to reconcile the choice of the old *Canopus*, despite her formidable 12-inch guns, with my sense of what was fitting for the pursuit and destruction of German cruisers with a squadron speed of some twenty-one knots. From Port Stanley the *Glasgow* and *Monmouth* were despatched round the Horn upon a scouting expedition which was to extend as far as Valparaiso. Already the Southern Squadron was beginning to suffer from its remoteness from the original Pirates' Lair of the *Glasgow*. The Northern Squadron, collected from the corners of the earth, were receiving the supply ships first and skimming the cream off their cargoes before letting them loose for the service of their brethren in arms to the south. It was all very natural and inevitable, but rather irritating for those who had now to make the best of the knuckle end of the Admiralty's joints.

The trip round the Horn of the *Glasgow* and

Monmouth was very rough indeed; the English cruisers rolled continually gunwhale under, and had they chanced to encounter the *Dresden*—which was not then possible, for she was well up the Chilian coast—neither side could have fired a shot at the other. At Orange Bay, where they put in, they discovered evidence of the recent presence of the *Dresden* in rather a curious way. It had long been the custom of vessels visiting that remote desolate spot to erect boards giving their names and the date of their call. Upon the notice board of the German cruiser *Bremen*, left many months before, was read in pencil, partially obliterated by a cautious afterthought, the words "Dresden, September 11th, 1914."

During the early part of October, the two cruisers *Glasgow* and *Monmouth* worked up the Chilian coast and reached Valparaiso about October 17th. It was an expedition rather trying to the nerves of those who were responsible for the safety of the ships. Perhaps the word "squirmy" will best describe their feelings. Already the German concentration had taken place at Easter Island to the west of them; they did not positively know of it, but suspected, and felt apprehensive lest their presence in Chilian waters might be reported to von Spee and themselves cut off and overwhelmed before they could get away. Coal and provisions were running short, the crew were upon half rations, and any imprudence might be very severely punished.

During October the *Glasgow* and *Monmouth* were detached from the *Good Hope*, and it was not until the 28th that Cradock joined up with them at a point several hundred miles south of

Coronel, whither they had descended for coal and stores after their hazardous northern enterprise. Here also was the *Otranto*, but the *Canopus*, though steaming her best, had been left behind by the *Good Hope*, and was, for all practical purposes, of no account at all. She was 200 miles away when Coronel was fought. On October 28th, after receiving orders from Cradock, the *Glasgow* left by herself bound north for Coronel, a small Chilian coaling port, there to pick up mails and telegrams from England. The *Glasgow* arrived off Coronel on the 29th, but remained outside patrolling for forty-eight hours. The German wireless about her was very strong indeed, enemy ships were evidently close at hand, and at any moment might appear. They were indeed much nearer and more menacing than the *Glasgow* knew, even at this eleventh hour before the meeting took place. On October 26th Admiral von Spee was at Masafuera, a small island off the Chilian coast, on the 27th he left for Valparaiso itself, and there on the 31st he learned of the arrival in the port of Coronel of the English cruiser *Glasgow*. The clash of fighting ships was very near.

On October 31st the *Glasgow* entered the harbour of Coronel, a large harbour to which there are two entrances, and a rendezvous off the port had been arranged with the rest of the squadron for November 1st. Her arrival was at once notified to von Spee at Valparaiso. The mails and telegrams were collected, and at 9.15 on the 1st the *Glasgow* backed out cautiously, ready, if the Germans were in force outside, to slip back again into neutral waters and to take the fullest advantage of her twenty-four hours' law. She emerged seeing noth-

ing, though the enemy wireless was coming loudly, and met the *Good Hope*, *Monmouth*, and *Otranto* at the appointed rendezvous some eighty miles out to sea. Here the mails and telegrams were transferred to Cradock by putting them in a cask and towing it across the *Good Hope's* bows. The sea was rough, and this resourceful method was much quicker and less dangerous than the orthodox use of a boat. Cradock spread out his four ships, fifteen miles apart, and steamed to the north-west at ten knots. Smoke became visible to the *Glasgow* at 4.20 p.m., and as she increased speed to investigate, there appeared two four-funnelled armoured cruisers and one light cruiser with three funnels. Those four-funnelled ships were the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, and until they were seen at that moment by the *Glasgow* they were not positively known to have been on the Chilian coast. To this extent the German Admiral had taken his English opponents by surprise. "When we saw those damned four funnels," said the officers of the *Glasgow*, "we knew that there was the devil to pay."

I have already told the story of the Coronel action and I will not tell it again. Von Spee held off so long as the sun behind the English gave them the advantage of light, and did not close in until the sun had set and the yellow afterglow made his opponents stand out like silhouettes. He could see them while they could not see him. During the action, the light cruiser *Glasgow*, with which I am mainly concerned, had a very unhappy time. The armed liner *Otranto* cleared off, quite properly, and the *Glasgow*, third in the line, was exposed for more than an hour to the concentrated

fire of the 4.1-inch guns of both the *Leipzig* and *Dresden*, and afterwards, when the *Good Hope* had blown up and the *Monmouth* been disabled, for about a quarter of an hour to the 8.2-inch guns of the *Gneisenau*. Her gunnery officers could not see the splashes of their own shells, and could not correct the ranges. When darkness came down it was useless to continue firing blindly, and worse than useless, since her gun flashes gave some guidance to the enemy's gunners. At the range of about 11,000 yards, a long range for the German 4.1-inch guns, the shells were falling all around very steeply, the surface of the sea was churned into foam, and splinters from bursting shells rained over her. It is a wonderful thing that she suffered so little damage and that not a single man of her company was killed or severely wounded. Four slight wounds from splinters constituted her total tally of casualties. At least 600 shells, great and small, were fired at her, yet she was hit five times only. The most serious damage done was a big hole between wind and water on the port quarter near one of the screws. Yet even this hole did not prevent her from steaming away at twenty-four knots, and from covering several thousand miles before she was properly repaired. I think that the *Glasgow* must be a lucky ship. After the *Good Hope* had blown up and the *Monmouth*, badly hurt, was down by the bows and turning her stern to the seas, the *Glasgow* hung upon her consort's port quarter, anxious to give help and deeply reluctant to leave. Yet she could do nothing. The *Monmouth* was clearly doomed, and it was urgent that the *Glasgow* should get away to warn the *Canopus*, then 150 miles away and pressing

towards the scene of action, and to report the tragedy and the German concentration to the Admiralty at home. During that anxious waiting time, when the enemy's shells were still falling thickly about her, the sea, to the *Glasgow's* company, looked very, very cold! At last, when the moon was coming up brightly, and further delay might have made escape impossible, the *Glasgow* sorrowfully turned to the west, towards the wide Pacific spaces, and dashed off at full speed. It was not until half an hour later, when she was twelve miles distant, that she counted the seventy-five flashes of the *Nürnberg's* guns which finally destroyed the *Monmouth*. I am afraid that the story of the cheers from the *Monmouth* which sped the *Glasgow* upon her way must be dismissed as a pretty legend. No one in the *Glasgow* heard them, and no one from the *Monmouth* survived to tell the tale. Captain Grant and his men of the *Canopus* must have suffered agonies when they received the *Glasgow's* brief message. They had done their utmost to keep up with the *Good Hope*, and the slowness of their ship had been no fault of theirs. Grant had, I have been told, implored the Admiral to wait for him before risking an engagement.

The journey to the Straits and to her junction with the *Canopus* was a very anxious one for the *Glasgow's* company. They did their best to be cheerful, though cheerfulness was not easy to come by. They had witnessed the total defeat of an English by a German squadron, and before they could get down south into comparative safety the German ships, running down the chord of the arc which represented the *Glasgow's* course, might

arrive first at the Straits. That there was no pursuit to the south may be explained by the one word—coal. Von Spee could get coal at Valparaiso or at Coronel—though the local coal was soft, wretched stuff—but he had no means of replenishment farther south. One does not realize how completely a squadron of warships is tied to its colliers or to its coaling bases until one tries to discover and explain the movements of warships cruising in the outer seas.

While running down towards the Straits—for twenty-four hours she kept up twenty-four knots—the *Glasgow* briefly notified the *Canopus* of the disaster of Coronel and of her own intention to make for the Falkland Islands. Beyond this, she refrained from using the tell-tale wireless which might give away her position to a pursuing enemy. Upon the evening of the 3rd she picked up the German press story of the action, but kept silence upon it herself. On the morning of the 4th, very short of stores—her crew had been on reduced rations for a month—she reached the Straits and, to her great relief, found them empty of the enemy. She did not meet the *Canopus* until the 6th, and then, with the big battleship upon her weather quarter, to keep the seas somewhat off that sore hole in her side, she made a fortunately easy passage to the Falkland Islands and entered Port Stanley at daylight upon November 8th. Thence the *Glasgow* despatched her first telegram to the authorities at home, and at six o'clock in the evening set off with the *Canopus* for the north. But that same evening came orders from England for the *Canopus* to return, in order that the coaling base of the Falk-

lands might be defended, so the *Glasgow*, alone once more after many days, pursued her solitary way towards Rio and to her meeting with the *Carnarvon*, *Defence*, and *Cornwall*, which were at that time lying off the River Plate guarding the approaches to Montevideo and Buenos Ayres. The *Glasgow* had done her utmost to uphold the Flag, but the lot of the sole survivor of a naval disaster is always wretched. The one thing which counts in the eyes of English naval officers is the good opinion of their brethren of the sea; those of the *Glasgow* could not tell until they had tested it what would be the opinion of their colleagues in the Service. It was very kind, very sympathetic; so overflowing with kindness and sympathy were those who now learned the details of the disaster, that the company of the *Glasgow*, sorely humiliated, yet full of courage and hope for the day of reckoning, never afterwards forgot how much they owed to it. At home men growled foolishly, ignorantly, sank to the baseness of writing abusive letters to the newspapers, and even to the *Glasgow* herself, but the Service understood and sympathised, and it is the Service alone which counts.

CHAPTER XII

THE CRUISE OF THE "GLASGOW"

PART II.—CORONEL TO JUAN FERNANDEZ

(Nov. 1st, 1914, to March 14th, 1915)

WE left the British cruiser *Glasgow* off the River Plate, where she had arrived after her escape, sore at heart and battered in body, from the disaster of Coronel. The battleship *Canopus* remained behind at Port Stanley to defend the newly established coaling-station at the Falkland Islands. Her four 12-inch guns would have made the inner harbour impassable to the lightly armoured cruisers of Admiral von Spee had he descended before the reinforcements from the north arrived; and the colliers, cleverly hidden in the remote creeks of the Islands, would have been most difficult for him to discover. It was essential to our plans that there should be ample stores of coal at the Falklands for the use of Sturdee's punitive squadron when it should arrive, and every possible precaution was taken to ensure the supply. As it happened, von Spee did not come for five weeks. He was at his wits' end to find coal, and was, moreover, short of ammunition after the bombardment of Tahiti and the big expenditure in the Coronel fight. So he remained pottering about off the Chilian

coast until he had swept up enough of coal and of colliers to make his journey to the Falklands, and to provide for his return to the Lair which he had established in an inlet upon the coast.

At the English Bank, off the River Plate, the *Glasgow* had joined up with the *Carnarvon*, *Defence*, and *Cornwall*, and her company were greatly refreshed in spirit by the kindly understanding and sympathy of their brothers of the sea. The officers and men of the *Glasgow*, who had by now worked together for more than two years, had come through their shattering experiences with extraordinarily little loss of moral. They had suffered a material defeat, but their courage and confidence in the ultimate issue burned as brightly as ever. Even upon the night of the disaster, when they were seeking a safe road to the Straits, uncertain whether the Germans would arrive there first, they were much more concerned for the safety of the *Canopus* than worried about their own skins. Their captain and navigating lieutenant had thrust upon them difficulties and anxieties of which the others were at first ignorant. The ship's compasses were found to be gravely disturbed by the shocks of the action, their magnetism had been upset, and not until star sights could be taken were they able to correct the error of fully twenty degrees. The speed at which the cruiser travelled buried the stern deeply, and the water entering by the big hole blown in the port quarter threatened to flood a whole compartment and make it impossible for full speed to be maintained. The voyage to the Straits was, for those responsible, a period of grave anxiety. Yet through it all the officers and men did their work

and maintained a cheerful countenance, as if to pass almost scatheless through a tremendous torrent of shell, and to get away with waggling compasses and a great hole between wind and water, was an experience which custom had made of little moment. No one could have judged from their demeanour that never before November 1st had the *Glasgow* been in action, and that not until November 6th, when she had beside her the support of the *Canopus's* great guns, did she reach comparative safety.

The *Glasgow's* damaged side had been shored up internally with baulks of timber, but if she were to become sea- and battle-worthy it was necessary to seek for some more permanent means of repair. So with her consorts she made for Rio, arriving on the 16th, and reported her damaged condition to the Brazilian authorities. Under the Hague Convention she was entitled to remain at Rio for a sufficient time to be made seaworthy, and the Brazilian Government interpreted the Convention in the most generous sense. The Government floating dock was placed at her disposal, and here for five days she was repaired, until with her torn side plating entirely renewed she was as fit as ever for the perils of the sea. Her engineers took the fullest advantage of those invaluable days; they overhauled the boilers and engines so thoroughly that when the bold cruiser emerged from Rio she was fresh and clean, ready to steam at her own full speed of some twenty-six knots, and to fight anything with which she could reasonably be classed in weight of metal. By this time the *Glasgow* had learned of the great secret concentration about to take place at her old Pirates' Lair to the

north, and of those other concentrations which were designed to ensure the destruction of von Spee to whatsoever part of the wide oceans he might direct his ships.

The disaster of Coronel had set the Admiralty bustling to very good and thorough purpose. No fewer than five squadrons were directed to concentrate for the one purpose of ridding the seas of the German cruisers. First came down Sturdee with the battle cruisers *Invincible* and *Inflexible* to join the *Carnarvon, Glasgow, Kent, Cornwall,* and *Bristol* at the Pirates' Lair. Upon their arrival the armoured cruiser *Defence* was ordered to the Cape to complete there a watching squadron ready for von Spee should he seek safety in that direction. One Japanese squadron remained to guard the China seas, and another of great power sped across the Pacific towards the Chilian coast. In Australian waters were the battle cruiser *Australia* and her consorts of the Unit, together with the French cruiser *Montcalm.* Von Spee's end was certain; what was not quite so certain was whether he would fall to the Japanese or to Sturdee. Our Japanese Allies fully understood that we were gratified at his falling to us; he had sunk our ships and was our just prey. Yet if he had loitered much longer off Chili, and had not at last ventured upon his fatal Falklands dash, the gallant Japanese would have had him. Luck favoured us now, as it had favoured us a month earlier when the *Emden* was destroyed at the Cocos-Keeling Islands. Those who have read my story of the *Emden* in Chapter IX will remember that but for the fortune of position which placed the *Sydney* nearest to the Islands when their wireless call for help went out, the

famous raider would in all probability have fallen to a Japanese light cruiser which was with the Australian convoy.

The mission of the *Invincible* and *Inflexible*, and the secrecy with which it was enshrouded, is one of the most romantic episodes of the war. I have already dealt fully with it. But there has since come to me one little detail which reveals how very near we were, at one time, to a German discovery of the whole game. The two battle cruisers coaled at St. Vincent, Cape Verde Islands —Portuguese territory, within which we had no powers of censorship—and at the Pirates' Lair off the Brazilian coast. Their movements began to be talked about in Rio and the River Plate. Men knew of the Coronel disaster and shrewdly suspected that the two great ships were on their way to the South Atlantic. A description of their visit had been prepared, and was actually in type. It was intended for publication in a local South American paper. That it was not published, when urgent representations were made on our behalf, reveals how scrupulous was the consideration with which our friends of Brazil and the Argentine regarded our interests. There were no powers of censorship, the appeal was as man to man, and Englishman to Portuguese, and the appeal prevailed—even over the natural thirst of a journalist for highly interesting news. The battle cruisers coaled and passed upon their way, and no word of their visit went forth to Berlin or to von Spee.

The *Glasgow* was among the British cruisers which greeted Sturdee at the Pirates' Lair, and as soon as ammunition and stores had been distributed

and coal taken in, the voyage to the Falkland Islands began. The squadron arrived in the evening of December 7th, and at daybreak of the 8th von Spee ran upon his fate. The part played by the *Glasgow* in the action was less spectacular than that which fell to the battle cruisers, but it was useful and has some features of interest. Among other things it illustrates how little is known of the course of a naval action—spread over hundreds of miles of sea—while it takes place, and for some time even after it is over.

On the morning of December 8th, at eight o'clock, the approach of the German squadron was observed, and at this moment the English squadron was hard at work coaling. By 9.45 steam was up and the pursuit began. The *Glasgow* was lying in the inner harbour with banked fires, ready for sea at two hours' notice, but her Engineer Lieutenant-Commander Shrubsole and his staff so busied themselves that in little over an hour from the signal to raise steam she was under weigh, and an hour later she was moving in chase of the enemy at a higher speed than she obtained in her contractors' trials when she was a brand-new ship three years earlier. Throughout the war the engineering staff of the Royal Navy has never failed to go one better than anyone had the right to expect of it. It has never failed to respond to any call upon its energies or its skill, never.

In order that we may understand how the *Dresden* was able to make her escape unscathed from her pursuers—she bolted without firing a shot in the action—I must give some few details of the position of the ships when the German light cruisers were ordered by von Spee to take

themselves off as best they might. Shortly before one o'clock the *Glasgow*, a much faster ship than anything upon our side except the two battle cruisers, was two miles ahead of the flagship *Invincible*, and it was Sturdee's intention to attack the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*—hull down on the horizon—with his speediest ships, the *Invincible*, *Inflexible*, and *Glasgow*. Our three other cruisers —*Carnarvon*, *Cornwall*, and *Kent*—were well astern of the leaders. At 1.04 the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* turned to the eastward to accept battle and to cover the retreat of their light cruisers, which were then making off towards the southeast. Admiral Sturdee, seeing at once that the light cruisers might make good their escape unless the speedy *Glasgow* were detached in pursuit, called up the *Carnarvon* (Rear-Admiral Stoddart) to his support, and ordered Captain Luce in the *Glasgow* to take charge of the job of rounding up and destroying the *Leipzig*, *Nürnberg*, and *Dresden*. The *Glasgow*, therefore, began the chase at a grave disadvantage. She first had to work round the stern of the *Invincible*, pass the flagship upon her disengaged side, and then steam off from far in the rear after the *Cornwall* and *Kent*, which had already begun the pursuit. The *Leipzig* and *Nürnberg* were a long way off, and the *Dresden* was even farther. This cruiser, *Dresden*, though sister to the *Emden*, was, unlike her sister and the others of von Spee's light cruisers, fitted with Parsons' turbine engines. She was much the fastest of the German ships at the Falkland Islands, and beginning her flight with a start of some ten miles quickly was lost to sight beyond the horizon. The *Cornwall* and *Kent* had no chance at all of

overtaking her, and the *Glasgow*, whose captain was the senior naval officer in command of the pursuing squadron of the three English cruisers, could not overtake a long stern chase by herself so long as the *Leipzig* and *Nürnberg* were in his course and had not been disposed of. He was obliged first to make sure of them. Steaming at twenty-four and a half knots, the *Glasgow* drew away from the battle cruisers and began to overhaul the *Leipzig* and *Nürnberg*. She decided to attack the *Leipzig*, which was nearest to her, and to regulate her speed so that the *Cornwall* and *Kent*—both more powerful but much slower ships than herself—would not be left behind. As it happened the engineering staffs of these not very rapid "County" cruisers rose nobly to the emergency, the *Cornwall* was able to catch the *Leipzig* and to take a large part in her destruction, while the *Kent* kept on after the *Nürnberg* and, as it proved, was successful in destroying her also. One of the ten boilers of the *Nürnberg* had been out of action for weeks past and her speed was a good deal below its best.

The sea is a very big place, but that portion of it contained within the ring of the visible horizon is very small. To those in the *Glasgow*, pressing on in chase of the *Leipzig*, the scene appeared strange and even ominous. They could see the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* far away, moving apparently in pursuit of themselves, but the battle cruisers hidden below the curve of the horizon they could not see. When firing from the *Invincible* and *Inflexible* ceased for a while—as it did at intervals—it seemed to the *Glasgow's* company that they were sandwiched between von Spee's armoured cruisers and his light cruisers, and that

the battle cruisers, upon which the result of the action depended, had disappeared into space. The telegraph room and the conning-tower doubtless knew what was happening, but the ship's company as a whole did not. To this brevity of vision, and to this detachment from exact information, one must set down the extraordinarily conflicting stories one receives from the observers of a naval action. They see what is within the horizon but not what is below it, and that which is below is not uncommonly far more important than that which is above.

Shortly after three o'clock the *Glasgow* opened upon the *Leipzig* with her foremost 6-inch gun at a range of about 12,000 yards (about seven miles), seeking to outrange the lighter 4.1-inch guns carried by the German cruiser. The distance closed down gradually to 10,000 yards, at which range the German guns could occasionally get in their work. They could, as the *Emden* showed in her fight with the *Sydney*, and as was observed at Coronel, do effective shooting even at 11,000 yards, but hits were difficult to bring off, owing to the steepness of the fall of the shells and the narrowness of the mark aimed at. For more than an hour the *Glasgow* engaged the *Leipzig* by herself, knocking out her secondary control position between the funnels, and allowing the *Cornwall* time to arrive and to help to finish the business with her fourteen 6-inch guns. At one time the range fell as low as 9,000 yards, the *Leipzig's* gunners became very accurate, and the *Glasgow* suffered nearly all the casualties which overtook her in the action.

About 4.20 the *Cornwall* was able to open fire,

and the *Glasgow* joined her, so that both ships might concentrate upon the same side of the *Leipzig*. Just as Admiral Sturdee in his fight with the *Scharnhorst* and the *Gneisenau* could not afford to run risks of damage far from a repairing base, so the *Glasgow* and the *Cornwall* with several hours of daylight before them were not justified in allowing impatience to hazard the safety of the ships. They had to regard the possible use of torpedoes and to look out for dropped mines. Neither torpedoes nor mines were, in fact, used by the Germans, though at one time in the course of the action drums, mistaken for mines, were seen in the water and carefully avoided. They were cases in which cartridges were brought from the magazines, and which were thrown overboard after being emptied. As the afternoon drew on the weather turned rather misty, and the attacking ships were obliged to close in a little and hurry up the business. This was at half-past five.

From the first the *Leipzig* never had a chance. She was out-steamed and utterly out-gunned. Her opponents had between them four times her broadside weight of metal, and the *Cornwall* was an armoured ship. She never had a chance, yet she went on, fired some 1,500 rounds—all that remained in her magazines after Coronel—and did not finally cease firing until after seven o'clock. For more than four hours her company had looked certain death in the face yet gallantly stood to their work. From first to last von Spee's concentrated squadron played the naval game according to the immemorial rules, and died like gentlemen. Peace be to their ashes. In success and in failure they were the most gallant and honour-

able of foes. At seven o'clock the *Leipzig* was smashed to pieces, she was blazing from stem to stern, she was doomed, yet gave no sign of surrender.

At this moment, when the work of the *Glasgow* and the *Cornwall* had been done—the *Cornwall*, it should be noted, bore the heavier burden in this action—she was hit eighteen times, though little hurt, and played her part with the utmost loyalty and devotion—at this moment flashed the news through the ether that the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* had been sunk. The news spread, and loud cheers went up from the English ships. To the doomed company in the *Leipzig* those cheers must have carried some hint of the utter disaster which had overtaken their squadron. It was not until nine o'clock (six hours after the *Glasgow* had begun to fire upon her) that she made her last plunge—if a modern compartment ship does not blow up, she takes a powerful lot of shell to sink her—and the English ships did everything that they could to save life. The *Glasgow* drew close up under her stern and lowered boats, at the same time signalling that she was trying to save life. There was no reply. Perhaps the signals were not read; perhaps there were not many left alive to make reply. The *Leipzig*, still blazing, rolled right over to port and disappeared. Six officers, including the Navigating Lieutenant-Commander, and eight men were picked up by the *Glasgow's* boats. Fourteen officers and men out of nearly 300! The captives were treated as honoured guests and made much of. Our officers and men took their gallant defeated foes to their hearts and gave them of their best. It was not

until two days later, when news arrived that the *Leipzig's* sister and consort the *Nürnberg* had been sunk by the *Kent*, that these brave men broke down. Then they wept. They cared little for the *Dresden*—a stranger from the North Atlantic—but the *Nürnberg* was their own consort, beside whom they had sailed for years, and beside whom they had fought. They had hoped to the last that she might make good her escape from the wreck of von Spee's squadron. When that last hope failed they wept. When I think of von Spee's gallant men, so human in their strength and in their weakness, I cannot regard them as other than worthy brothers of the sea.

In the Coronel action the *Glasgow*, exposed to the concentrated fire of the *Leipzig* and *Dresden* for an hour, and to the heavy guns of the *Gneisenau* for some ten minutes, did not lose a single man. There were four slight wounds from splinters, that was all. But in her long fight with the *Leipzig* alone, assisted by the powerful batteries of the *Cornwall*, the *Glasgow* suffered two men killed, three men severely wounded, and six slightly hurt. Such are the strange chances of war. After Coronel, though they had seen two of their own ships go down and were in flight from an overwhelming enemy, the officers and men were wonderfully cheerful. The shrewder the buffets of Fate the stiffer became their tails. But after the Falklands, when success had wiped out the humiliation of failure, there came a nervous reaction. Defeat could not depress the spirit of these men, but victory, by relieving their minds from the long strain of the past months, made them captious and irritable. Perhaps their spirits

THE CRUISE OF THE "GLASGOW."

were overshadowed by the prospect of the weary hunt for the fugitive *Dresden*.

. . . . .

> By wondrous accident perchance one may
> Grope out a needle in a load of hay.

Four German cruisers had been sunk, but one, the *Dresden*, had escaped, and the story of the next three months is the story of a search—always wearisome, sometimes dangerous, sometimes even absurd. The Straits of Magellan, the islands of Tierra del Fuego and of the Horn, and the west coast of the South American spur are a maze of inlets, many uncharted, nearly all unsurveyed. The hunt for the elusive *Dresden* among the channels, creeks, and islands was far more difficult than the proverbial grope for a needle in a load of hay. A needle buried in hay cannot change its position; provided that it really be hidden in a load, patience and a magnet will infallibly bring it forth. The *Dresden* could move from one hiding place to another, no search for her could ever exhaust the possible hiding-places, and it was not positively known until after she had been run down and destroyed where she had been in hiding. That she was found after three weary months may be explained by that one word which explains so much in naval work—coal. The *Dresden* after her flight from the Falkland Islands action was short of coal; von Spee's attendant colliers, *Baden* and *Santa Isabel*, had been pursued and sunk by the *Bristol* and the armed liner *Macedonia*, and she was cast upon the world without means of replenishing her bunkers. This was, of course, known to her pursuers, so that they

expected, and expected rightly, that she would hang about in some secluded creek until her dwindling supplies drove her forth upon the seas to hunt for more. Which is what happened.

Upon the evening of December 8th, after the *Glasgow* and *Cornwall* had disposed of the *Leipzig*, there were one English and two German cruisers unaccounted for. The *Kent* had last been seen chasing the *Nürnberg* towards the south-east, while the *Dresden* was disappearing over the curve of the horizon to the south. Upon the following morning no news had come in from the *Kent*, and some anxiety was felt; it was necessary to find her before proceeding with the pursuit of the *Dresden*, and much valuable time was lost. It happened that during her fight with the *Nürnberg*, which she sank in a most business-like fashion, the *Kent's* aerials were shot away and she lost wireless contact with Sturdee's squadron. The *Glasgow* was ordered off to search for her, but fortunately the *Kent* turned up on the morning of the 10th deservedly triumphant. She had performed the great feat of catching and sinking a vessel which on paper was much faster than herself, and she had done it though short of coal and at the sacrifice of everything wooden on board, including the wardroom furniture. She was compelled with the *Glasgow* and *Cornwall* to return to Port Stanley for coal, and this delay was of the utmost service to the fugitive *Dresden*. Though the movements of that cruiser, in the interval, were not learned until much later, it will be convenient if I give them now, so that the situation may be made clear. The *Dresden* had owed her escape to her speed and to the occupation

of the *Glasgow*—the only cruiser upon our side which could catch her—with the *Leipzig*. She got clear away, rounded the Horn on the 9th, and on December 10th entered the Cockburn Channel on the west coast of Tierra del Fuego. At Stoll Bay she passed the night, and her coal-bunkers being empty sent men ashore to cut enough wood to enable her to struggle up to Punta Arenas. She ran a great risk by making for so conspicuous a port, but she had no choice. Coal must be obtained somehow or her number would speedily go up. She was not entitled to get Chilian coal, for she had managed to delude the authorities into supplying her upon five previous occasions during the statutory period of three months. Once in three months a belligerent warship is permitted, under the Hague Rules, to coal at the ports of a neutral country; once she claims this privilege she is cut off from getting more coal from the same country for three months. But the *Dresden* again managed, as she had already done four times before, to secure supplies illegitimately. She coaled at Punta Arenas, remained there for thirty-one hours—though after twenty-four hours she was liable to internment—and left at 10 p.m. on the 13th. It was this disregard for the Hague Rules which led to the destruction of the *Dresden* in Chilian territorial waters at Juan Fernandez three months later. We held that she had broken international law deliberately many times, she was no longer entitled to claim its protection. She could not disregard it when it knocked against her convenience, and shelter herself under it when in need of a protective mantle. She had by her own violations become an outlaw.

At 2.30 a.m. on the 13th, Sturdee learned that the *Dresden* was at Punta Arenas. The *Bristol*, which was ready, jumped off the mark at once; the *Inflexible* and the *Glasgow*, which were not quite ready, got off at 9.15. Thus it happened that the *Bristol* reached Punta Arenas seventeen hours after the *Dresden* had left, to vanish, as it were, into space, and not to be heard of again for a couple of months. What she did was to slip down again into the Cockburn Channel and lie at anchor in Hewett Bay near the southern exit. On December 26th she shifted her quarters to an uncharted and totally uninhabited creek, called the Gonzales Channel, and there she lay in idle security until February 4th.

During the long weeks of the *Dresden's* stay in Hewett Bay and the Gonzales Channel, the English cruisers were busily hunting for her among the islets and inlets of the Magellan Straits, Tierra del Fuego, and the west coast of the South American spur. The *Carnarvon*, *Cornwall*, and *Kent* took charge of the Magellan Straits, the *Glasgow* and *Bristol* ferreted about the recesses of the west coast with the *Inflexible* outside of them to chase the sea-rat should she break cover for the open. The battle cruiser *Australia* came in from the Pacific and with the "County" cruiser *Newcastle*, from Mexico, kept watch off Valparaiso. The *Dresden*, lying snug in the Gonzales Channel, was not approached except once, on December 29th, when one of the searchers was within twenty miles of her hiding-place. The weather was thick and she was not seen. The big ships did not long waste their time over the search. It was one better suited to light craft, for lighter craft even

than the *Glasgow* or *Bristol*, for which the uncharted channels often threatened grave dangers. Armed patrols or picket boats, of shallow draught, were best suited to the work, and in its later stages were furbished up and made available.

On December 16th the battle cruisers *Invincible* and *Inflexible* were recalled to England, and the *Canopus* went north to act as guardship at the precious Pirates' Lair which has figured so often in these pages. The *Australia* passed on her way to the Atlantic, across which the Canadian contingents were in need of convoy, and the supervision of the *Dresden* search devolved upon Admiral Stoddart of the *Carnarvon*. The Admiral with the *Carnarvon* and *Cornwall* remained in and out of the Magellan Straits, while the captain of the *Glasgow*, with him the *Kent*, *Bristol*, and *Newcastle*, was put in charge of the Chilian Archipelago. Gradually as time went on and the *Dresden* lay low—all this while in the Gonzales Channel—other ships went away upon more urgent duties and the chase was left to the *Glasgow*, *Kent*, and an armed liner *Orama*. The *Bristol* had butted herself ashore in one of the unsurveyed channels and was obliged to seek a dock for repairs. The great concentration of which the *Glasgow* had been the focus was over, she was now back at her old police work, though not upon her old station. She had begun the war in sole charge of the South Atlantic; the wheel of circumstance had brought her, with her consorts, to the charge of the South Pacific.

Although the *Glasgow's* company had had many experiences of the risks of war, they had never felt in action the strain upon their nerves which was always with them day in day out during that

long weary hunt for the *Dresden* in the Chilian Archipelago. They explored no less than 7,000 miles of narrow waters, for the most part uncharted, feeling their way by lead and by mother wit, becoming learned in the look of the towering rocks which shut them in, and in the kelp growing upon their sea margins. The channels wound among steep high cliffs, around which they could not see. As they worked stealthily round sharp corners, they were always expecting to encounter the *Dresden* with every gun and torpedo tube registered upon the narrow space into which they must emerge. Their own guns and torpedoes were always ready for instant action, but in this game of hide-and-seek the advantage of surprise must always rest with the hidden conscious enemy. This daily strain went on through half of December and the whole of January and February! One cannot feel surprised to learn that in the view of the *Glasgow's* company the actions of Coronel and the Falklands were gay picnics when set in comparison with that hourly expectation throughout two and a half months of the sudden discovery of the *Dresden*, and that anticipated blast of every gun and mouldy which she could on the instant bring to bear. Added to this danger of sudden attack was the ever-present risk of maritime disaster. It is no light task to navigate for three months waters to which exist no sailing directions and no charts of even tolerable accuracy. Upon Captain Luce and upon his second in command, Lieutentant-Commander Wilfred Thompson, rested a load of responsibility which it would be difficult to overestimate.

It was not until early in March that any authentic

news of the movements of the *Dresden* became available. Upon February 4th she had issued forth of the Gonzales Channel and crept stealthily up the Chilian coast. To the *Glasgow* had come during the long weeks of the *Dresden's* hiding many reports that she was obliged to investigate. Many times our own cruisers were seen by ignorant observers on shore and mistaken for the *Dresden;* out would flow stories which, wandering by way of South American ports—and sometimes by way of London itself—would come to rest in the *Glasgow's* wireless-room and increase the burden thrown upon her officers. More than once she was taken by shore watchers to be the *Dresden,* and urgently warned from home to be on the look-out for herself!

At last the veil lifted. The *Dresden,* with her coal of Punta Arenas approaching exhaustion, was sighted at a certain spot well up the Chilian coast where had been situated von Spee's secret Lair. The news was rushed out to the *Glasgow,* and since her consort, the *Kent,* was nearest to the designated spot this cruiser was despatched at once to investigate. As at the Falklands action, her engineers rose to the need for rapid movement. For thirty-six hours continuously she steamed northwards at seventeen knots, and arrived just before daybreak on the 7th. Nothing was then in sight, nor until three o'clock in the afternoon of the following day, the 8th. While in misty weather the *Kent* was waiting and watching out at sea, a cloud bank lifted and the *Dresden* was revealed. She had not been seen by us since the day of her flight, December 8th, exactly three months before! The *Dresden* was a shabby spectacle, her paint gone, her sides raw with rust

and standing high out of the water. She was evidently light, and almost out of coal. The *Kent* at once made for her quarry, but the *Dresden*, a much faster ship, drew away. Foul as she was, for she had not been in dock since the war began, the *Kent* was little cleaner. The *Dresden* drew away, but the relentless pursuit of the indefatigable *Kent* kept her at full speed for six hours, and left her with no more than enough fuel to reach Masafuera or Juan Fernandez. By thus forcing the *Dresden* to burn most of the fuel which still remained in her bunkers, the *Kent* performed an invaluable service. This was on March 8th. Juan Fernandez was judged to be the most likely spot in which she would take refuge, and thither the *Glasgow*, *Kent*, and *Orama* foregathered, arriving at daybreak on the 14th. In Cumberland Bay, 600 yards from the shore, the *Dresden* lay at anchor; the chase was over. She had arrived at 8.30 a.m. on the 9th; she had been in Chilian waters for nearly five days. Yet her flag was still flying, and there was no evidence that she had been interned. Cumberland Bay is a small settlement, and there was no Chilian force present capable of interning a German warship.

I will indicate what happened. The main facts have been told in the correspondence which took place later between the Chilian and British Governments. I will tell the story as I have myself gathered it, and as I interpret it.

The *Dresden* lay in neutral Chilian waters, yet her flag was flying, and she had trained her guns upon the English squadron which had found her there. There was nothing to prevent her—though liable to internment—from making off unless steps

were taken at once to put her out of action. She had many times before broken the neutrality regulations of Chili, and was rightly held by us to be an outlaw to be captured or sunk at sight. Acting upon this just interpretation of the true meaning of neutrality, Captain Luce of the *Glasgow*, the senior naval officer, directed his own guns and those of the *Kent* to be immediately fired upon the *Dresden*. The first broadside dismounted her forecastle guns and set her ablaze. She returned the fire without touching either of the English ships. Then, after an inglorious two and a half minutes, the *Dresden's* flag came down.

Captain Lüdecke of the *Dresden* despatched a boat conveying his "adjutant" to the *Glasgow* for what he called "negotiations," but the English captain declined a parley. He would accept nothing but unconditional surrender. Lüdecke claimed that his ship was entitled to remain in Cumberland Bay for repairs, that she had not been interned, and that his flag had been struck as a signal of negotiation and not of surrender. When the Englishman Luce would not talk except through the voices of his guns, the German adjutant went back to his ship and Lüdecke then blew her up. His crew had already gone ashore, and the preparations for destroying the *Dresden* had been made before her captain entered upon his so-called "negotiations."

It was upon the whole fortunate that Lüdecke took the step of sinking the *Dresden* himself. It might have caused awkward diplomatic complications had we taken possession of her in undoubted Chilian territorial waters, and yet we could not have permitted her any opportunity of

escaping under the fiction of internment. Nothing would have been heard of internment if the English squadron had not turned up—the *Dresden* had already made an appointment with a collier—and if we had not by our fire so damaged the cruiser that she could not have taken once more to the sea. Her self-destruction saved us a great deal of trouble. In the interval between the firing and the sinking of the *Dresden*, the Maritime Governor of Juan Fernandez suggested that the English should take away essential parts of the machinery and telegraph for a Chilian warship to do the internment business. Neither of these proceedings was necessary after the explosion. The *Dresden* was at the bottom of Cumberland Bay, and the British Government apologised to the Chilians for the technical violation of territorial waters. The apology was accepted, and everyone was happy—not the least the officers and men of the *Dresden* who, after months of aimless, hopeless wanderings, found themselves still alive and in a sunny land flowing with milk and honey. After their long stay in Tierra del Fuego the warmth of Chili must have seemed like paradise. The *Dresden* yielded to the *Glasgow* one item of the spoils of war. After the German cruiser had sunk, a small pig was seen swimming about in the Bay. It had been left behind by its late friends, but found new ones in the *Glasgow's* crew. That pig is alive still, or was until quite recently. Grown very large, very hairy, and very truculent, and appropriately named von Tirpitz, it has been preserved from the fate which waits upon less famous pigs, and possesses in England a sty and a nameplate all to its distinguished self.

With the sinking of the *Dresden* the cruise of the *Glasgow*, which I have set out to tell, comes to a close. She returned to the South Atlantic, and for a further stretch of eighteen months her officers and men continued their duties on board. But life must for them have become rather dull. There were no more Coronels, or Falkland Islands actions, or hunts for elusive German cruisers. Just the daily work of a light cruiser on patrol duty in time of war. When in the limelight they played their part worthily, and I do not doubt continued to play it as worthily, though less conspicuously, when they passed into the darkness of the wings, and other officers, other men, and other ships occupied in their turn the bright scenes upon the naval stage.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BATTLE OF THE GIANTS: SOME IMPRESSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

PART I

IT is strange how events of great national importance become associated in one's mind with small personal experiences. I have told with what vividness I remember the receipt in November, 1914, of private news that the battle cruisers *Invincible* and *Inflexible* had left Devonport for the Falkland Islands, and how I heard Lord Rosebery read out Sturdee's victorious dispatch to 6,000 people in St. Andrew's Hall, Glasgow. In a similar way the Jutland battle became impressed upon my mind in an unforgettable personal fashion. On May 22nd, 1916, I learned that Admiral Beatty had at his disposal the four "Cats"—*Lion*, *Tiger*, *Queen Mary*, and *Princess Royal*—of about twenty-nine knots speed, and each armed with eight 13.5-inch guns, the two battle cruisers *New Zealand* and *Indefatigable*, of some twenty-seven knots of speed, and carrying each eight 12-inch guns, and the Queen Elizabeths, of twenty-five knots, all of which were armed with eight of the new 15-inch guns, which were a great advance upon the earlier thirteen-point-fives. The ships of the Fifth Battle Squadron had all been completed since the war

began. The *Queen Elizabeth* herself went into dock at Rosyth for repairs, so that for immediate service the squadron was reduced to four ships—*Barham, Valiant, Warspite,* and *Malaya.*

Upon the following Saturday, May 27th, I was invited to lunch in one of the battleships, but upon arrival at South Queensferry, I found the Fleet under Short Notice for sea, and no one was allowed to leave the ships, or to receive friends on board. It was a beautiful day, the long, light-coloured Cats and the Futurist-grey battleships were a most noble sight, but I felt too much like a Peri shut out of Paradise to be happy in observing them. A day or two later, Thursday, June 1st, was fixed for my next visit, but again the Fates were unkind. When I arrived in the early morning and stood upon the heights overlooking the anchorage, Beatty's Fleet had gone, and, though I did not know it, had even then fought the Jutland battle. In the afternoon, news came with the return to the Forth of the damaged battleship *Warspite* surrounded by her attendant destroyers. That was on the Thursday afternoon, but it was not until the evening of Friday that the first Admiralty message was issued, that famous message which will never be forgotten either by the country or by the Navy. The impression which it made may be simply illustrated. I was sitting in my drawing-room after dinner, anxiously looking for news both on national and personal grounds, when a newsboy shrieked under my window "Great Naval Disaster: Five British Battleships Sunk." The news printed in the paper was not so bad as that shouted, but it was bad enough; it gave the impression of very heavy losses incurred for no

compensating purpose, and turned what had really been a conspicuous naval success into an apology for a naval disaster. As a humble student, I could to some extent read between the lines of the dispatch and dimly perceive what had happened, but to the mass of the British public, the wording of that immortal document could not have been worse conceived. To them it seemed that the End of All Things was at hand.

The story runs that the first bulletin was made up by clerks from scraps of messages which came over the wireless from the Grand Fleet, but in which the most important sentence of all was omitted. "The Germans are claiming a victory," wailed the Admiralty clerks through the aerials at Whitehall. "What shall we say?" "Say," snapped the Grand Fleet, "say that we gave them hell!" If the Admiralty had only said this, said it, too, in curt, blasphemous naval fashion, the public would have understood, and all would have been well. What a dramatic chance was then lost! Think what a roar of laughter and cheering would have echoed round the world if the first dispatch had run as follows:

"We have met and fought the German Fleet, and given it hell. Beatty lost the *Queen Mary* and *Indefatigable* in the first part of the battle when the odds were heavily against us, but Jellicoe coming up enveloped the enemy, and was only prevented by mist and low visibility from destroying him utterly. The Germans have lost as many ships as we have, and are shattered beyond repair."

That message, in a few words, would have given a true impression of the greatest sea fight that the world has known, a fight, too, which has

established beyond question the unchallengeable supremacy of British strategy, battle tactics, seamanship, discipline, and devotion to duty of every man and boy in the professional Navy. In the technical sense, it was an indecisive battle: the Germans escaped destruction. But morally, and in its practical results, no sea fight has been more decisive. Nearly two years have passed since that morning of June 1st when the grey dawn showed the seas empty of German ships, and though the High Seas Fleet has put out many times since then, it has never again ventured to engage us. Jutland drove sea warfare, for the Germans, beneath the surface, a petty war of raids upon merchant vessels, a war—as against neutrals—of piracy and murder. By eight o'clock on the evening of May 31st, 1916, the Germans had been out-fought, out-manœuvred, and cut off from their bases. Had the battle begun three hours earlier, and had visibility been as full as it had been in the Falkland Islands action, had there been, above all, ample sea room, there would not have been a German battleship afloat when the sun went down. There never was a luckier fleet than that one which scrambled away through the darkness of May 31st–June 1st, worked its way round the enveloping horns of Jellicoe, Beatty, and Evan-Thomas, and arrived gasping and shattered at Wilhelmshaven. We can pardon the Kaiser, who, in his relief for a crowning mercy, proclaimed the escape to be a glorious victory.

But though the Kaiser may, after his manner, talk of victories, German naval officers cherish no illusions about Jutland. If one takes the trouble to analyse their very full dispatches, their

relief at escaping destruction shines forth too plainly to be mistaken. Admiral Scheer got away, and showed himself to be a consummate master of his art. But he never, in his dispatches, claims that the British Fleets were defeated in the military sense. They were foiled, chiefly through his own skill, but they were not defeated. The German dispatches state definitely that the battle of May 31st "confirmed the old truth, that the large fighting ship, the ship which combines the maximum of strength in attack and defence, rules the seas." The relation of strength, they say, between the English and German Fleets, "was roughly two to one." They do not claim that this overwhelming superiority in our strength was sensibly reduced by the losses in the battle, nor that the large English fighting ships—admittedly larger, much more numerous, and more powerfully gunned than their own—ceased after Jutland to rule the seas. Their claim, critically examined, is simply that in the circumstances the German ships made a highly successful escape. And so indeed they did.

The Jutland battle always presents itself to my mind in a series of clear-cut pictures. Very few of those who take part in a big naval battle see anything of it. They are at their stations, occupied with their pressing duties, and the world without is hidden from them. I try to imagine the various phases of the battle as they were unfolded before the eyes of those few in the fighting squadrons who did see. Perhaps if I try to paint for my readers those scenes which are vividly before me, I may convey to them something of what I have tried to learn myself.

Let us transport ourselves to the signal bridge of Admiral Beatty's flagship, the battle cruiser *Lion*, and take up station there upon the afternoon of May 31st, at half-past two. It is a fine afternoon, though hazy; the clouds lie in heavy banks, and the horizon, instead of appearing as a hard line, is an indefinable blend of grey sea and grey cloud. It is a day of "low visibility," a day greatly favouring a weak fleet which desires to evade a decisive action. We have been sweeping the lower North Sea, and are steering towards the north-west on our way to rejoin Jellicoe's main Fleet. Our flagship, *Lion*, is the leading vessel of the First Battle Cruiser Squadron, and following behind us, we can see the *Princess Royal*, *Queen Mary*, and *Tiger*. At a little distance behind the *Tiger* appear the two ships which remain to us of the Second Battle Cruiser Squadron, the *Indefatigable* and *New Zealand*, fine powerful ships, but neither so fast nor so powerful as are our four Cats of the First Squadron. Some five or six miles to the west of us we can make out, against the afternoon sky, the huge bulk of the *Barham*, which, followed by her three consorts, *Valiant*, *Warspite*, and *Malaya*, leads the Fifth Battle Squadron of the most powerful fighting ships afloat. We are the spear-head of Beatty's Fleet, but those great ships yonder, silhouetted against the sky, are its most solid shaft.

Word runs round the ship that the enemy has been sighted, but since we know nothing of his numbers or of his quality—Jutland, though anticipated and worked for, was essentially a battle of encounter—our light cruisers fly off to make touch and find out for us. Away also soars

THE BATTLE OF THE GIANTS.

seaplane, rising from the platform of our carrying ship *Engadine*, a clumsy-looking seagull, with its big pontoon feet, but very fast and very deftly handled. The seaplane flies low, for the clouds droop towards the sea, it is heavily fired upon, but is not hit, and it returns to tell us—or rather the Admiral, in his conning tower below—just what he wishes to learn. There is an enemy battle cruiser squadron immediately in front of us, consisting of five armoured ships, with their attendant light cruisers and destroyers. The German battle cruisers are: *Derfflinger* (12-inch guns), *Lützow* (12-inch), *Moltke* (11-inch), *Seydlitz* (11-inch), and another stated by the Germans to be the *Von der Tann*, which had more than once been reported lost. Since our four big battle cruisers carry 13.5-inch guns, and two other guns of 12-inch, and the four battleships supporting us great 15-inch weapons, we ought to eat up the German battle cruisers if we can draw near enough to see them distinctly. By half-past three the two British battle cruiser squadrons are moving at twenty-five knots, formed up in line of battle, and the Fifth Battle Squadron, still some five miles away, is steaming at about twenty-three knots. The Germans have turned in a southerly direction, and are flying at full speed upon a course which is roughly parallel with that which we have now taken up. During the past hour we have come round nearly twelve points—eight points go to a right angle—and are now speeding away from Jellicoe's Grand Fleet, which is some forty miles distant to the north and west. Since we are faster than Jellicoe, the gap between us and him is steadily opening out.

From the signal bridge, a very exposed position, we can see the turret guns below us and the spotting top above. The turrets swing round, as the gunners inside get their directions from the gunnery-control officer who, in his turn, receives every few moments the results of the range-finding and rate-of-change observations which are being continually taken by petty officers charged with the duty. Further corrections will be made when the guns begin to shoot, and the spotting officers aloft watch for the splashes of the shells as they fall into the sea. Naval gunnery, in spite of all the brains and experience lavished upon it, must always be far from an exact science. One has to do with moving ships firing at other moving ships, many factors which go to a precise calculation are imperfectly known, and though the margin of error may be reduced by modern instruments of precision, the long fighting ranges of to-day make the error substantial. The lower the visibility, the greater becomes the gunner's uncertainty, for neither range-finding nor spotting can be carried on with accuracy. Even on the clearest of days it is difficult to "spot" a shell-splash at more than 14,000 yards (eight land miles), a range which is short for the huge naval gun. When many guns are firing, it is not easy to pick up the splashes of one's own shells, and to distinguish between their water-bursts and the camouflage put up by an enemy.

At our position upon the signal bridge, though we are there only in spirit, we probably feel much more of excitement than does any officer or man of the big ship upon which we have intruded our ghostly presence. Most of them can see nothing;

all of them are too busy upon their duties to bother about personal feelings. There is an atmosphere of serene confidence in themselves and their ship which communicates itself even to outsiders like us. At 3.48 the enemy is some 18,500 yards distance, and visible, for the light has improved, and firing begins almost simultaneously from us and our opponents. The first crash from the *Lion's* two fore-turrets nearly throws us off the bridge, so sudden and fierce it is, and so little does its intensity seem to be subdued by our ear-protectors. But as other crashes follow down the line we grow accustomed to them, grip tightly at the hand-rail, and forget ourselves in the grandeur of the sight unfolding itself before us. Away, far away, is the enemy, hull down, smothered in smoke and by the huge gouts of spray thrown up by our bursting shells. He is adding to the splashes by firing his own side batteries into the sea to confuse the judgment of our spotters.

At each discharge from our ship, a great cone of incandescent gas flames forth, cutting like a sword through the pale curtain of smoke. From the distant enemy ships we can see thin flashes spurt in reply, and his shells pitch beside us and over us, lashing our decks with sea foam and sometimes throwing a torrent of water over the spotting top and bridge. Before five minutes have passed, we are wet through, our ears are drumming in spite of the faithful protectors, and all sensation except of absorbed interest in the battle has left us. At any moment we may be scattered by a bursting shell, or carried to the bottom with our sunken ship, but we do not give a thought to the risks.

While we are firing at the enemy, and he is

firing at us at ranges varying from ten to eight miles, a fierce battle is going on between the lines of big ships. Light cruisers are fighting light cruisers, destroyers are rushing upon destroyers. At an early stage in the action, the German Admiral Hipper—in command of the battle cruisers—launched fifteen destroyers at our line, and was taught a rough lesson in the quality of the boys who man our T.B.D.s. Twelve of our heavier and more powerfully armed destroyers fell upon the German fifteen, huddled them into a bunch, and had started to lay them out scientifically with gun and torpedo, when they fled back to the shelter of their own big ships. Following them up, our destroyers delivered a volley of torpedoes upon the German battle cruisers at less than 3,000 yards distance. Probably no damage was done, for it is the forlornest of jobs to loose mouldies against fast manœuvring ships, but lack of success does not in any way dim the splendour of the attempt. As light cruisers and destroyers fight and manœuvre, the torrent of heavy shells screams over their heads, flying as high in their course as Alpine mountains, and dropping almost vertically near the lines of battle cruisers.

As soon as we turned to the south in pursuit of Hipper's advance squadron of battle cruisers, Admiral Evan-Thomas closed his supporting battleships upon us, and we can now see them clearly about two miles away on our starboard quarter, formed in line of battle, the flagship *Barham* leading. At eight minutes past four they join in the fight, firing at a range of 20,000 yards (twelve miles), not an excessive distance for their tremendous flat-shooting 15-inch guns if the light were good,

but too far for accuracy now that the enemy ships can be seen so very indistinctly. Up to now the German gunnery has been good; our ships have not often been seriously struck, but the shells in bunched salvoes have fallen very closely beside us. Our armour, though much thinner than that of the battleships behind us, is sufficient to keep off the enemy's light shells—our 13.5-inch shells are twice the weight of his 11-inch, and the 15-inch shells fired by the Queen Elizabeths astern of us are more than twice the weight of his 12-inch. We feel little anxiety for our turrets, conning towers, or sides, but we notice how steeply his salvoes are falling at the long ranges, and are not without concern for our thin decks should any 12-inch shells of 850 lb. weight plump fairly upon them from the skies. By half-past four the German fire has slackened a good deal, has become ragged and inaccurate, showing that we are getting home with our heavy stuff, and the third ship in the line is seen to be on fire. All is going well, the enemy is outclassed in ships and in guns; we are still between him and his bases to the south-west, he is already becoming squeezed up against the big banks which stretch out one hundred miles from the Jutland coast, and for a while it looks as if Beatty had struck something both soft and good.

But a few minutes make a great change. All through the last hour we have been steaming fast towards the main German High Seas Fleet and away from Jellicoe, and at 4.42 the leading German battleships can be seen upon the smoky horizon to the south-east. Though we do not know it yet, the whole High Seas Fleet is before us, including sixteen of the best German ships, and it

were the worst of folly to go any farther towards it. We could, it is true, completely outflank it by continuing on our present course, and with our high speed might avoid being crushed in a general action, but we should have irrevocably separated ourselves from Jellicoe, and have committed a tactical mistake of the biggest kind. We should have divided the English forces in the face of the enemy, instead of concentrating them. So a quick order comes from the conning tower below, and away beside us runs a signal hoist. "Sixteen points, starboard." Sixteen points mean a complete half-circle, and round come our ships, the *Lion* leading, turning in a curve of which the diameter is nearly a mile, and heading now to the north, towards Jellicoe, instead of to the south, away from him. Our purpose now is to keep the Germans fully occupied until Jellicoe, who is driving his battleships at their fullest speed, can come down and wipe Fritz off the seas. As we come round, the German battle cruisers follow our manœuvre, and also turn through sixteen points in order to place themselves at the head of the enemy's battle line.

As we swing round and take up our new course, we pass between the Queen Elizabeths and the enemy, masking their fire, and for a few minutes we are exposed in the midst of a critical manœuvre to the concentrated salvoes of every German battleship within range. The range is long, the German shells fired with high elevation fall very steeply, and we are safe except from the ill-luck of heavy projectiles pitching upon our decks. From the signal bridge of the *Lion* we can see every battle cruiser as it swings, or as it approaches

the turning point, we can see the whole beautiful length of them, and we also see a sight which has never before been impressed upon the eyes of man. For we see two splendid battle cruisers struck and sink; first the *Indefatigable,* and then the *Queen Mary.* It is not permitted to us to describe the scene as actually it presented itself to our eyes.

Beatty has lost two battle cruisers, one of the first class and one of the second. There remain to him four—the three Cats and the *New Zealand;* he is sorely weakened, but does not hesitate. He has two duties to carry out—to lead the enemy towards Jellicoe, and so dispose of his battle cruisers beyond the head of the German lines as powerfully to aid Jellicoe in completing their development. Beatty is now round, and round also comes the Fifth Battle Squadron, forming astern of the battle cruisers, and with them engaging the leading German ships. The enemy is some 14,000 yards distant from us in the *Lion* (8½ miles), and this range changes little while Beatty is speeding first north and then north-east, in order to cross the "T" of the German line. We will continue to stand upon the *Lion's* bridge during the execution of this most spirited manœuvre, and then leave Beatty's flagship in order to observe from the spotting top of a battleship how the four Queen Elizabeths fought the whole High Seas Fleet, while our battle cruisers were turning its van. What these splendid ships did, and did to perfection, was to stall the Germans off, and so give time both for the enveloping movement of Beatty and for the arrival and deployment of Jellicoe's main Fleet.

By five o'clock Beatty is fairly off upon his

gallant adventure, and during the next hour, the hardest fought part of the whole battle, the gap between the battle cruisers and the four supporting battleships steadily widens. If the Germans are to be enveloped, Beatty must at the critical moment allow sufficient space between himself and Evan-Thomas for Jellicoe to deploy his big Fleet between them, and this involves on the part of the Commander-in-Chief a deployment in the midst of battle of a delicacy and accuracy only possible to a naval tactician of the highest order. But both Beatty and Evan-Thomas know their Jellicoe, to whom, at few-minute intervals, crackle from the aerials above us wireless messages giving with naval precision the exact courses and speeds of our ships and the bearings of the enemy. For an hour—up to the moment when we turned to the north—we ran away from Jellicoe, but during the next hour we steamed towards him; we know that he is pressing to our aid with all the speed which his panting engineers can get out of his squadrons. Beatty's battle cruisers, curving round the head of the German line at a range of 14,000 to 12,000 yards, are firing all the while, and being fired at all the while, but though often hit, they are safer now than when they were a couple of miles more distant.

We have now reached a very important phase in the battle. It is twenty minutes past six. At six o'clock the leading vessels of Jellicoe's Grand Fleet had been sighted five miles to the north of us and his three battle cruisers—*Invincible* (Admiral Hood), *Inflexible*, and *Indomitable* —have flown down to the help of Beatty. They come into action, steaming hard due south, and

take station ahead of us in the *Lion*. By this lengthening of his line to the south Beatty has now completely enveloped the German battle cruisers, which turn through some twelve points and endeavour to wriggle out of the jaws of the trap which they see closing remorselessly upon them. They are followed in this turn by the battleships of the High Seas Fleet which, for more than an hour, have been faithfully hammered by Evan-Thomas's Queen Elizabeths, and show up against the sky a very ragged outline. The range of the battle cruisers is now down to 8,000 yards, and they get well home upon battleships as well as upon opponents of their own class. We do not ourselves escape loss, for the *Invincible*, which has become the leading ship, is shattered by concentrated gunfire. The gallant Hood, with his men, has gone to join his great naval ancestors.

And now let us put the clock back to the hour, 4.57, when the Queen Elizabeths had completed their turn to the north, and had taken up position astern of Beatty to hold off the main German Fleet while he is making his enveloping rush. From the spotting top of the battleship upon which we have descended we get a most inspiring view, though every now and then we are smothered in oily smoke from the huge flat funnels below us, and are drenched with water which is flung up in torrents by shells bursting alongside. The enemy ships upon which we are firing are some 18,000 yards distant, we can with great difficulty make them out amid the smoke and haze, and we wonder mightily how the keen-eyed spotting officers beside us can judge and correct, as they appear

to be doing, the bursts of our shells more than ten miles distance. Our guns, and those of our consorts, are firing deliberately, for we do not know how long the battle will endure, and the supply of 15-inch shell and cordite cannot be unlimited in the very biggest of ships. We learn from the spotting officers that all our ships, except the *Valiant*, have been hit several times while coming into action by dropping shots, but that no serious harm has been done. Meanwhile the shells are falling fast about us, and all of our ships are repeatedly straddled. The *Warspite* suffered the most severely, though even she was able to go home to the Forth under her own steam. This is the battleship whose steering gear went wrong later in the action, and which turned two complete "O's" at full speed. Round she went in great circles of a mile in diameter, spitting shots with every gun that bore upon the enemy during her wild gyrations. Fritz began well, but does not seem able to stand punishment. He rarely hits us now, though we are giving him a much better mark than he presents to us. For we are silhouetted against the almost clear sky to the west, while he—and there are a great many of him—is buried in mist and smoke to the east. Rarely can our range-finding officers take a clear observation; rarely can our spotters make sure of a correction. Yet every now and then we note signs that our low-flying, hard-hitting shells—each one of which weighs not much short of a ton! —are getting home upon him at least as frequently as his shots are hitting us. Three of his battleships are new, built since the war began, but the rest are just Königs and Kaisers, no better than

our Dreadnoughts of half a dozen years ago. We would willingly take on twice our numbers of such battleships and fight them to a finish upon a clear summer's day.

Our battle tactics are now plain to see. They are to keep out to the farthest visible range, to avoid being materially damaged, and to keep Fritz's battleships so fully occupied that they will have no opportunity of closing in upon Beatty when he completes his envelopment. We can see our battle cruisers some three miles away, swinging more and more round the head of the German line, and the enemy's battle cruisers edging away in the effort to avoid being outflanked. Far away to the north appears the smoke of the three battle cruisers which are speeding ahead of Jellicoe's main Fleet; they are getting their instructions from Beatty's *Lion*, and are already making for the head of his line so as to prolong it, and so to complete the envelopment which is now our urgent purpose. Our Queen Elizabeth battleships are not hurrying either their engines or their guns. We are moving just fast enough to keep slightly ahead of the first half-dozen of the German battleships; we are pounding them steadily whenever a decent mark is offered us—which unhappily is not often—and we have seen one big ship go down smothered in smoke and flames. The time draws on and it is already six o'clock; we have borne the burden of the fight for more than an hour, though it seems but a few minutes since we turned more than twenty miles back to the south, and first gave Fritz a taste of what the Fifth Battle Squadron could do. We are slowing down now, and the gap between us and Beatty is widening

out, for we know that Jellicoe is coming, and that he will deploy his three battle squadrons between us and our battle cruisers which, extended in a long line, with Hood's *Invincible* in front, are well round the head of the German ships. The whole German Fleet is curving into a long, close-knit spiral between us and Beatty, and, if the light will hold, we have it ripe for destruction. We have played our part; the issue now rests with Jellicoe and the gods of weather.

Everything for which we and the battle cruisers have fought and suffered, for which we have risked and lost the *Queen Mary* and *Indefatigable*, is drawing to its appointed end. Our Fifth Battle Squadron has nearly stopped, and has inclined four points towards the east, so as to allow the gap for Jellicoe's deployment to widen out. Firing upon both sides has ceased. We have great work still to do, and are anxious to keep all the shells we yet carry for it, and the enemy is too heavily battered and in too grievous a peril to think of anything but his immediate escape. We are waiting for Jellicoe, whose squadrons are already beginning to deploy.

While the Queen Elizabeths wait, ready at any moment to resume the action whenever and wherever their tremendous services may be called for, we will leave the Fifth Battle Squadron, and, flying far over the sea, will penetrate into the Holy of Holies, the conning tower of the Fleet flagship wherein stands the small, firm-lipped, eager-eyed man who is the brain and nerve centre of the battle. There are those who have as sharp a thirst for battle—Beatty has; and there are

those who have been as patient under long-drawn-out delays and disappointments—Kitchener was; yet there have been few fighting men in English history who could, as Jellicoe can, combine enduring patience with the most burning ardour, and never allow the one to achieve mastery over the other. Watch him now in the conning tower of the *Iron Duke*. He has waited and worked during twenty-two months for just this moment, when the German High Seas Fleet have placed their cards upon the table, and he, exactly at the proper instant, will play his overwhelming trumps. If ever a man had excuse for too hasty a movement, for too great an eagerness to snatch at victory, Jellicoe would have one now. His eyes flash, and one may read in them the man's intense anxiety not to allow one moment of unnecessary delay to interpose between his Fleet and the scattering enemy. Yet until the exact moment arrives when he can with sure hand deploy his squadrons into line of battle, and fit them with precision into the gap made for them between Beatty to the east and south and Evan-Thomas to the west and south, he will not give the order which, once given, cannot be recalled. For as soon as his Fleet has deployed, it will be largely out of his hands, its dispositions will have been made, and if it deploys too soon, the crushing opportunity will be missed, and the Germans will infallibly escape. So, with his divisions well in hand, he watches upon the chart the movements of his own and Beatty's vessels, as the wireless waves report them to him, and every few minutes goes to the observation hoods of the conning tower, and seeks to peer through the thick haze and

smoke which still hide from him the enveloping horns of the English ships, and the curving masses of the enemy. If he could see clearly his task would be less difficult and the culmination of his hopes less doubtful. But he cannot see; he has to work by wireless and by instinct, largely by faith, trusting to the judgment of Beatty and Evan-Thomas, far away, and himself subject to the ever-varying uncertainties of sea fighting. He goes back to the chart, upon which his staff are noting down the condensed essence of all the messages as they flow in, and then, the moment having arrived, he gives the word. Away run the signal flags, picked up and interpreted by every squadron flagship, and then repeated by every ship. The close divisions of the Grand Fleet spread out, melt gracefully into lines—to all appearance as easily as if they were battalions of infantry—they swing round to the east, the foremost vessel reaching out to join up with Beatty's battle cruisers. As the Grand Fleet deploys, Evan-Thomas swings in his four Queen Elizabeths so that the *Barham*, without haste or hesitation, falls in behind the aftermost of Jellicoe's battleships, and the remainder of the Fifth Battle Squadron completes the line, which stretches now in one long curve to the west and north and east of the beaten Germans. The deployment is complete, the whole Grand Fleet has concentrated, the enemy is surrounded on three sides, we are faster than he is, and more than twice as powerful; if the light will hold, his end has come. Although from the *Iron Duke* we cannot now see the wide enveloping horns, yet we have lately been with them and know them. The main Fleet

in whose centre we now steam, consists of Dreadnoughts, Orions, King George the Fifths, Iron Dukes (all acting as flagships), Royal Sovereigns, with 15-inch guns, the *Canada*, with 14-inch guns, and that queer Dago ship the *Agincourt*, with her seven turrets all on the middle line, and each containing two 12-inch guns. Not a ship in our battle line has been afloat for more than seven years, and most of them are less than three years old. The material newness of the Grand Fleet is a most striking testimony to the eternal youth of the Navy's ancient soul.

We have now concentrated in battle line the battleships of our own main Fleet and six battle cruisers, after allowing for our losses, and the Germans have, after making a similar allowance, not more than fourteen battleships and three battle cruisers. I do not count obsolete pre-Dreadnoughts. The disparity in force is greater even than is shown by the bare numbers, which it is not permitted to give exactly. Scarcely a ship of the enemy can compare in fighting force with the Queen Elizabeths or the Royal Sovereigns, or even with the Iron Dukes, Orions, and King George the Fifths. Of course he made off; he would have been a fool if he had not—and Admiral Scheer is far from being a fool.

Our concentrated Fleet came into action at 6.17, and at this moment the Germans were curving in a spiral towards the south-west, seeking a way out of the sea lion's jaws. They were greatly favoured by the mist and were handled with superb skill. They relied upon constant torpedo attacks to fend off our battleships, while their own big vessels worked themselves clear. We could never see

more than four or five ships at a time in their van, or from eight to ten in their rear. For two hours the English Fleet, both battleships and battle cruisers, sought to close, and now and then would get well home upon the enemy at from 11,000 to 9,000 yards, but again and again under cover of torpedo attacks and smoke clouds, the Germans opened out the range and evaded us. We could not get in our heavy blows for long enough to crush Scheer, and he could not get in his mosquito attacks with sufficient success wholly to stave us off. For us those two hours of hunting an elusive enemy amid smoke and fog banks were intensely exasperating; for him they must have been not less intensely nerve-racking. All the while we were hunting him, he was edging away to the southwest—"pursuing the English" was his own humorous description of the manœuvre—and both Jellicoe and Beatty were pressing down between him and the land, and endeavouring to push him away from his bases. All the while our battleships and battle cruisers were firing heavily upon any German ship which they could see, damaging many, and sinking one at least. The return fire was so ragged and ineffective that our vessels were scarcely touched, and only three men were wounded in the whole of Jellicoe's main Fleet. By nine o'clock both Beatty and Jellicoe were far down the Jutland coast, and had turned towards the south-west in the expectation that daylight would reveal to them the German Fleet in a favourable position for ending the business.

CHAPTER XIV

THE BATTLE OF THE GIANTS: SOME IMPRESSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

Part II

At the close of my previous Chapter I took a mean advantage of my readers. For I broke off at the most interesting and baffling phase in the whole Battle of the Giants. It was easy to write of the first two phases—the battle-cruiser action up to the turn where the *Queen Mary* and *Indefatigable* were lost, and the phase during which Beatty, though sorely weakened, gallantly headed off the German line, and Evan-Thomas, with his Fifth Battle Squadron, stalled off the Main High Seas Fleet in order to allow Beatty the time necessary for the execution of his manœuvre, and Jellicoe the time to bring up the Grand Fleet. This second phase of the battle was perfectly planned and perfectly executed. It will always stand out in the pages of English Naval History as a classical example of English battle tactics. I could have described these two phases with much more of intimate detail had the Censor permitted, but perhaps I gave enough to make clear what was sought to be done and what was, in fact, achieved.

When Jellicoe had deployed his potent squadrons, fitting them in between Evan-Thomas and Beatty

and curving round the head of the German line, which by then had turned back upon itself and taken the form of a closely knit spiral, the Germans appeared to be doomed. They were not enveloped in the strict sense of being surrounded—we were twice as strong as they were in numbers of modern ships and nearly three times as strong in effective gun power, yet we had not nearly sufficient numbers actually to surround them. A complete envelopment of an enemy fleet rarely, if ever, occurs at sea. But though Admiral Scheer was not surrounded he was in the most imminent peril of destruction. Jellicoe and Beatty were between his ships and the Jutland Coast, and as they pressed towards the south and west were pushing him away from the Wet Triangle and the security of his home bases. We had him outmanœuvred and beaten, but we did not destroy him. Why was that?

No question is more difficult to answer fairly and truthfully. I have discussed this third critical phase of the battle with a great many officers who were present—and in a position to see what happened—and with a great many who, though not present, had means of informing themselves upon essential details. I have studied line by line the English and German dispatches and have paid more regard to what they do not tell than to what they do tell. It is stupid to reject Admiral Scheer's dispatch as fiction; it is not, but it is coloured with the purpose of making the least of his tactical defeat and the most of his very skilful escape. Jellicoe's dispatch is also coloured. I do not doubt that the statements contained in it are strictly true, but there are obvious omissions. By a process of examination and inquiry I have

arrived at an answer to my question. I put it forward in all deference, for though I am of the Navy in blood and spirit, and have studied it all my life, yet I am a layman without sea training in the Service.

The first point essential to an understanding is that Jellicoe's deployment was not complete until late in the afternoon, 6.17 p.m. G.M.T., that the evening was misty, and the "visibility" poor. Had the encounter between Beatty's and Hipper's battle cruisers occurred two hours earlier, and had Jellicoe come into action at 4.15 instead of 6.15, one may feel confident that there would not now be any High Seas German Fleet, that we could, since May 31st, 1916, have maintained a close blockade with fast light craft of the German North Sea and Baltic bases, and that the U-boat activity, which still threatens our sea communications and has had a profound influence on the progress of the war, would never have been allowed by us to develop. Upon so little, two hours of a day in late spring, sometimes hangs the fate of nations.

The afternoon was drawing towards evening; the light was poor, the German lines had curved away seeking safety in flight. But there remained confronting us Hipper's battle cruisers and Scheer's faster battleships, supported by swarms of torpedo craft. We also had our destroyers, many of them, and light cruisers. There was one chance of safety open to Scheer, and he took it with a judgment in design and a skill in execution which marks him out as a great sea captain. His one chance was so to fend off and delay Jellicoe and Beatty by repeated torpedo attacks driven home, that the big English ships would not be able to close in

upon the main German Fleet and destroy it by gun-fire while light remained to give a mark to the gunners. And so Scheer decided to "attack," and did attack. In his dispatch he deliberately gives the impression—for the comfort and gratification of German readers—that he successfully attacked our Grand Fleet with his main High Seas Fleet. He was no fool of that sort. He attacked, but it was with torpedo craft supported by Hipper's battle cruisers.

The range of a modern torpedo, the range at which it may occasionally be effective, is not far short of 12,000 yards, about seven land miles. This, when the visibility is low, is about the extreme effective range for heavy guns. The guns can shoot much farther, twice as far, when the gunners or the fire directors up aloft can see; but gunnery without proper light is a highly wasteful and ineffective business. At the range—usually about 12,000 yards, though sometimes coming down to 9,000 yards—to which the German torpedo attacks forced Jellicoe and Beatty to keep out, only some four or five enemy ships in the van could be seen at once; more of the rear squadron could be seen, though never more than eight or twelve. Our marks were usually not the hulls of the enemy's ships but the elusive flashes of his guns. Scheer used his torpedo craft in exactly the same way as a skilful land General—in the old days of open fighting—used his cavalry during a retreat. He used them to cover by repeated charges, sometimes of single flotillas, at other times of heavily massed squadrons, the retirement of his main forces.

If, therefore, we combine the factor of low visibility and the approach of sunset, with the other

factor of the long range of the modern torpedo, we begin to understand why Jellicoe and Beatty were not able to close in upon their enemy and wipe him off the seas. From the English point of view the third phase—that critical third phase to which the first and second phases had led up and which, under favourable circumstances, would have ended with the destruction of the German Fleet—found us in the position of a "following" or "chasing" fleet. But from the German point of view the same phase found their fleet in the position of "attackers." I have shown how these points of view can be reconciled, for while the main German Fleet was intent upon getting away and our main fleet was intent upon following it up and engaging it, the German battle cruisers, supported by swarms of torpedo craft, were fighting a spirited rearguard action and attacking us continually. The visibility was poor and mist troubled both sides. But the escape of the Germans was not wholly due to the difficulty of seeing them distinctly. If we could have closed in we should have seen his ships all right; we did not close in because the persistence and boldness of his torpedo attacks prevented us.

The third phase, which lasted from 6.17 p.m. until 8.20 p.m., was fought generally at about 12,000 yards, though now and then the range came down to 9,000 yards. The Germans, fending us off with torpedo onslaughts, did their utmost to open out the ranges and used smoke screens to lessen what visibility the atmosphere permitted. Their gun-fire was so poor and ineffective that Jellicoe's Main Fleet was barely scratched and three men only were wounded. But we cannot escape from the conclusion that Scheer's rearguard tactics were

successful, he did fend Jellicoe off and kept him from closing, and he did withdraw the bulk of his fleet from the jaws which during two hours were seeking to close upon it. He made two heavy destroyer attacks, during one of which the battleship *Marlborough* was hit but was able to get back to dock under her own steam. The third phase of the Jutland Battle was exactly like a contest between two boxers—one heavy and the other light—being fought in an open field without ropes. The little man, continually side-stepping and retreating, kept the big man off; the big man could not close for fear of a sudden jab in his vital parts, and there were no corners to the ring into which the evasive light weight could be driven.

If one applies this key to the English and German descriptions of the third phase in the Jutland Battle one becomes able to reconcile them, and becomes able to understand why the immensely relieved Germans claim their skilful escape as a gift from Heaven. They do not in their dispatches claim to have defeated Jellicoe, except in the restricted sense of having foiled his purpose of compassing their destruction. They got out of the battle very cheaply, whatever may have been their actual losses. This they realise as plainly as we do. Relief shines out of every line of their official story and is compressed, without reserve, into its concluding sentence. "Whoever had the fortune to take part in the battle will joyfully recognise with a thankful heart that the protection of the Most High was with us. It is an old historical truth that fortune favours the brave."

. . . . . .

I am afraid that I can do little to elucidate the

fourth phase of the Battle of the Giants—the night scrimmage (one cannot call it a battle) during which our destroyers were seeking out the enemy ships in the darkness and plugging holes into them at every opportunity. And that dawn upon June 1st, of which so much was hoped and from which nothing was realised? Who can describe that? Nothing that I can write would approach in sublimity the German dispatch. Consider what the situation was. Jellicoe and Beatty had worked far down the Jutland coast and had partially edged their way between Scheer and the German bases. Their destroyers had sought out the German ships, found them and loosed mouldies at them, lost them again and found them again; finally had lost them altogether. At dawn the visibility was even lower than during the previous evening—only three to four miles—our destroyers were out of sight and touch and did not rejoin till 9 o'clock. No enemy was in sight, and after cruising about until 11 o'clock Jellicoe was forced to the conclusion that Scheer had got away round his far-stretching horns and was even then threading the mine fields which protected his ports of refuge. There was no more to be done, and the English squadrons, robbed of the prey upon which they had set their clutches, steamed off towards their northern fastnesses. There the fleet fuelled and replenished with ammunition, and 9.30 a.m. on June 2nd was reported ready for action. The German description of that dawn is a masterpiece in the art of verbal camouflage: "As the sun rose upon the morning of the historic First of June in the eastern sky, each one of us expected that the awakening sun would illumine the British line advancing to renew the

battle. This expectation was not realized. The sea all round, so far as the eye could see, was empty. One of our airships which had been sent up reported, later in the morning, having seen twelve ships of a line-of-battle squadron coming from the southern part of the North Sea holding a northerly course at great speed. To the great regret of all it was then too late for our fleet to intercept and attack them." The British Fleet, which the writer regretted not to see upon the dawn of a long day in late spring, was of more than twice the strength of his own. It would have had sixteen hours of daylight within which to devour him; yet he regretted its absence! The Germans must be a very simple people, abysmally ignorant of the sea if this sort of guff stimulates their vanity.

. . . . .

In war the moral is far greater than the material, the psychological than the mechanical. One cannot begin to understand the simplest of actions unless one knows something of the spirit of the men who fight them. In sea battles, more than in contests upon land, events revolve round the personalities of the leaders and results depend upon the skill with which these leaders have gauged the problem set them, and dispose their forces to meet those varying phases which lead up to a conclusion. It is borne in upon us by hard experience that the southern part of the North Sea is not big enough and not deep enough to afford space for a first-class naval battle to be fought out to the finish. The enemy is too near his home bases, he can break off an action and get away before being overwhelmed. Yet even in the southern North Sea there is room

in which to dispose great naval forces and in which to manœuvre them. Fleets are not tucked up by space as are modern armies. Jutland was a battle of encounter and manœuvre, not of heavy destructive fighting. There was a dainty deftness about the first two phases which is eminently pleasing to our national sea pride, and however we may growl at the tactical incompleteness of the battle we cannot but admit that, taken as a whole, it was as strategically decisive an action as has ever been fought by the English Navy throughout its long history. It re-established the old doctrine, which the course of the Sea War has tended to thrust out of sight, that Command of the Sea rests as completely as it always has done in the past upon the big fighting ships of the main battle line. Upon them everything else depends; the operations of destroyers and light cruisers, of patrols and even of submarines. For upon big ships depends the security of home bases. Surface ships alone can occupy the wide spaces of the sea and can hold securely the ports in one's own country and the ports which are ravished from an enemy. Submarines are essentially raiders, their office is the obstruction of sea communications, but submarines are useless, even for their special work of obstruction, unless they can retire, refit, and replenish stores at bases made secure by the existence in effective being of a strong force of big fighting ships. Had Jutland been as great a tactical success as it was a strategical success, had it ended with the wiping out of the German High Seas Fleet, then, as I have already stated, the U-boat menace would have been scotched by the destruction of the protecting screen behind which the U-boats are built, refitted, and

replenished. No small part of the German relief at the issue of Jutland is due to their realisation of this naval truth. They express that realisation in a sentence which contains the whole doctrine of the efficacy of the big ship as the final determinant in naval warfare. Admiral Scheer in his dispatch declared that the Battle of May 31st, 1916, "confirmed the old truth that the large fighting ship, the ship which combines the maximum of strength in attack and defence, rules the seas." They do not claim that the English superiority in strength—which they place at "roughly two to one"—was sensibly reduced by our losses in the battle, nor that the large English fighting ships—admittedly larger, more numerous, and more powerfully gunned than their own—ceased after Jutland to rule the seas. The German claim, critically considered, is simply that in the circumstances it was a very lucky escape for the German ships. And so indeed it was. It left them with the means of securing their bases from which could be carried on the U-boat warfare against our mercantile communications at sea.

When the day arrives for the veil which at present enshrouds naval operations to be lifted, and details can be discussed freely and frankly, a whole literature will grow up around the Battle of the Giants. Strategically, I repeat—even at the risk of becoming tedious—it was a great success, both in its inception and in its practical results. Tactically its success was not complete. The Falkland Islands and Coronel actions were by comparison simple affairs of which all essential details are known. Jutland, from six o'clock in the evening of May 31st until dawn upon June 1st, when the opposing fleets had

completely lost touch, the one with the other, is a puzzling confusing business which will take years of discussion and of elucidation wholly to resolve—if ever it be fully resolved. If any one be permitted to describe the three actions in a few words apiece one would say that Coronel was both strategically and tactically a brilliant success for the Germans. Von Spee concentrated his squadron outside the range of our observation, placed himself in a position of overwhelming tactical advantage, and won a shattering victory. At the Falkland Islands action we did to Von Spee exactly what he had done to us at Coronel. This time it was the English concentration which was effected outside the German observation, and it was the German squadron which was wiped out when the tactical clash came. The first two phases of Jutland were, in spite of our serious losses in ships, notable tactical successes; they ended with Beatty round the head of the German Fleet and Jellicoe deployed in masterly fashion between Beatty and Evan-Thomas. Then we get the exasperating third phase, in which the honours of skilful evasion rest with the Germans, and the fourth or night phase, during which confusion became worse confounded until all touch was lost. And yet, in spite of the tactical failure of the third and fourth phases, the battle as a whole was so great a success that it left us with an unchallengeable command of the sea—a more complete command than even after Trafalgar. The Germans learned that they could not fight us in the open with the smallest hope of success. One of the direct fruits of Jutland was the intensified U-boat warfare against merchant shipping. The Germans had learned in the early part of the war that they could not wear

down our battleship strength by under-water attacks; they learned at Jutland that they could not place their battleships in line against ours and hope to survive; nothing was left to them except to prey upon our lines of sea communication. And being a people in whose eyes everything is fair in war —their national industry—they proceeded to make the utmost of the form of attack which remained to them. Viewed, therefore, in its influence upon the progress of the war, the Battle of Jutland was among the most momentous in our long sea history.

I have discussed the Battle of the Giants so often, and so remorselessly, with many officers who were present and many others who though not present were in a position to know much which is hidden from onlookers, that I fear lest I may have worn out their beautiful patience. There are two outstanding figures, Beatty and Jellicoe, about whose personalities all discussion of Jutland must revolve. They are men of very different types. Beatty is essentially a fighter; Jellicoe is essentially a student. In power of intellect and in knowledge of his profession Jellicoe is a dozen planes above Beatty. And yet when it comes to fighting, in small things and in great, Beatty has an instinct for the right stroke at the right moment, which in war is beyond price. Whether in peace or in war, Jellicoe would always be conspicuous among contemporaries; Beatty, unless war has given him the stage upon which to develop his flair for battle, would not have stood out. He got early chances, in the Soudan and in China; he seized them both and rushed up the ladder of promotion. He was promoted so quickly that he outstripped his technical education. As a naval strategist and tactician Jellicoe is the

first man in his profession; Beatty is by professional training neither a strategist nor a tactician—he was a commander at twenty-seven and a captain at twenty-nine—but give him a fighting problem to be solved out in the open with the guns firing, and he will solve it by sheer instinctive genius. In the Battle of Jutland both Beatty and Jellicoe played their parts with consummate skill; Beatty was in the limelight all through, while Jellicoe was off the stage during the first two acts. Yet Jellicoe's part was incomparably the more difficult, for upon him, though absent, the whole issue of the battle depended. His deployment by judgment and instinct—sight was withheld from him by the weather—was perfect in its timing and precision. He should have been crowned with the bays of a complete Victor, but the Fates were unkind. He was robbed of his prey when it was almost within his jaws. Do not be so blind and foolish as to depreciate the splendid skill and services of Lord Jellicoe.

. . . . .

I find the writing of this second Chapter upon the Battle of the Giants a very difficult job. Twice I have tried and failed; this is the result of the third effort. My failures have been used to light the fires of my house. Even now I am deeply conscious of the inadequacy of my tentative reflections. Upon so many points one has not the data; upon so many others one is not allowed—no doubt properly—yet still not allowed to say what one knows. Though sometimes I write grave articles, many of my readers know that by instinct I am a story-teller, and to me narrative by dialogue comes

more readily than a disquisition. Therefore, if you will permit me, I will cast the remaining portion of this chapter into the form of dialogue and make of it a discussion between two Admirals, a Captain, and myself. One of these Admirals I will call a Salt Horse, a man who has seen service during half a century but who has not specialised in a technical branch such as gunnery, or navigation, or torpedoes. A Salt Horse is an all-round sailor. The other Admiral I will call a Maker, and regard him as a highly competent technical officer in the design and construction of ships of war, of their guns, and of their armour. The Captain, a younger man, I will call a Gunner, one who has specialised in naval gunnery in all its branches, and one who knows the old methods and those which now are new and secret. These officers have not been drawn by me from among my own friends. They are not individuals but are types. Any attempts which may be made at identifying them will fail and justly fail—for they do not exist as individuals. Let this be clearly understood. They are creations of my own; I use them to give a sense of vividness to a narrative which tends to become tedious, and to bring out features in the Battle of Jutland which cannot without impertinence be presented directly by one, like myself, who is not himself a naval officer.

Bennet Copplestone, an intrusive and persistent fellow, begins the conference by inquiring whether Beatty had, in the professional judgment of his brother officers, deserved Admiral Jellicoe's praise of his "fine qualities of gallant leadership, firm determination, and correct strategic insight." Was he as good as his public reputation? I knew, I said,

a good deal too much of the making of newspaper reputations and had come to distrust them.

"Beatty is a real good man," declared the Maker. "He sticks his cap on one side and loves to be photographed looking like a Western American 'tough.' But under all this he conceals a fine naval head and the sturdiest of hearts. He is a first-class leader of men. I had my own private doubts of him until this Jutland Battle, but now I will take off my hat in his presence though he is my junior."

The Maker's colleagues nodded approval.

"There was nothing much in the first part," went on the Maker. "Any of us could have done it. His pursuit of the German battle cruisers up to their junction with the High Seas Fleet was a reconnaissance in force, which he was able to carry through without undue risk, because he had behind him the Fifth Battle Squadron. His change of course then through sixteen points was the only possible manœuvre in order to bring his fleet back towards Jellicoe and to lead the Germans into the trap prepared for them. So far Beatty had done nothing to distinguish him from any competent fleet leader. Where he showed greatness was in not diverging by a hair's breadth from his plans after the loss of the *Indefatigable* and the *Queen Mary*. Mind you, these losses were wholly unexpected, and staggering in their suddenness. He had lost these fine ships while fighting battle cruisers fewer in numbers and less powerful in guns than his own squadrons. A weaker man might have been shaken in nerve and lost confidence in himself and his ships. But Beatty did not hesitate. Although he was reduced in strength from six battle

cruisers to four only he dashed away to head off the Germans as serenely as if he had suffered no losses at all. And his splendid dash had nothing in it of recklessness. All the while he was heading off the Germans he was manœuvring to give himself the advantage of light and to avoid the dropping shots which had killed his lost cruisers. All the while he kept between the Germans and Jellicoe and within touch of his supporting squadron of four Queen Elizabeths. Had he lost more ships he could at any moment have broken off the action and, sheltered by the massive Fifth B.S., have saved what remained. As a mixture of dash and caution I regard his envelopment of the German line, after losing the *Queen Mary* and *Indefatigable*, as a superb exhibition of sound battle tactics and of sublime confidence in himself and his men. But I wish that he would not wear his cap on one side or talk so much. He has modified both these ill-practices since he became Commander-in-Chief. That is one comfort."

"Nelson was a poseur," said I, "and as theatrical as an elderly and ugly prima donna. He posed to the gallery in every action, and died, as it were, to the accompaniment of slow music. It was an amiable weakness."

"Jellicoe doesn't pose," growled the Maker.

"Jellicoe hates advertisement," I observed. "Whenever he used to talk to the gangs of newspaper men who infested the Grand Fleet, he always implored them to spare his own shrinking personality. It is a matter of temperament. Jellicoe is a genuinely modest man; Beatty is a vain one. They form a most interesting contrast. Life would be duller without such contrasts. One could give

a score of examples from military and naval history of high merit allied both to modesty and vanity."

"That is true," said the Maker, "but the Great Silent Sea Service loathes advertisement like the very devil, and it is right. The Service would be ruined if senior officers tried to bid against one another for newspaper puffs."

"Yet I have known them do it," said I drily, and then slid away from the delicate topic. "Let us return to the first part of the action, and examine the division of the Fleet between Jellicoe and Beatty. Was this division, admittedly hazardous, a sound method of bringing the Germans to action?"

The Gunner took upon himself to reply.

"It is not, and never has been, possible to bring the Germans to action in the southern part of the North Sea except with their own consent. There is no room. They can always break off and retire within their protected waters. Steam fleets of the modern size and speed cannot force an action and compel it to be fought out to a finish in a smaller space than a real ocean. You must always think of this when criticising the division of our fleets. Beatty was separated from Jellicoe by nearly sixty miles, and strengthened by four fast Queen Elizabeth battleships to enable him to fight an action with a superior German Fleet. He was made just strong enough to fight and not too strong to scare the Germans away. In theory, the division of our forces within striking distance of the enemy was all wrong; in practice, it was the only way of persuading him into an action. Both sides at the end of May, 1916, wanted to bring off a fight at sea. Fritz wanted something which he could claim as a

success in order to cheer up his blockaded grumblers at home, who were getting restive. We wanted to stop the projected German naval and military onslaught upon Russia in the Baltic. The wonderful thing about the Jutland Battle is that it appears to have achieved both objects. Fritz, by sinking three of our battle cruisers, has been able to delude a nation of landsmen into accepting a highly coloured version of a great naval success; and we, by making a sorry mess of his main fleet, did in fact clear the northern Russian flank of a grave peril. The later Russian successes in the South were the direct result of Jutland, and without those successes the subsequent Italian, French, and British advances could not have been pushed with anything like the effect secured. Regarded in this broad international way, the division of our fleets justified by its results the risks which it involved. What I don't understand is why we suffered so much in the first part of the action when Beatty had six battle cruisers and four battleships against five battle cruisers of the enemy. He lost the *Indefatigable* and *Queen Mary* while he was in great superiority both of numbers and of guns. Then, when the German main fleet had come in, and he was carrying out an infinitely more hazardous operation in the face of a greater superior force, he lost nothing. If the *Indefatigable* and *Queen Mary* had been lost during the second hour before Jellicoe arrived I should have felt no surprise—we were then deliberately risking big losses—but during the first hour of fighting, when we had ten ships against five—and five much weaker individually than our ten—we lost two fine battle cruisers. I confess that I am beaten. It almost looks as if at the beginning

the German gunners were better than ours, but that they went to pieces later. What do you think?" He turned to the Salt Horse, who spoke little, but very forcibly when he could be persuaded to open his lips.

"Everyone with Beatty, to whom I have spoken," declared the Salt Horse, "agrees that the German gunnery was excellent at the beginning. We were straddled immediately and hit again and again while coming into action. Our gunners must have been a bit over-anxious until they settled down. We ought to have done something solid in a whole hour against five battle cruisers with our thirty-two 13.5-inch guns and thirty-two 15-inch. And yet no one claims more than one enemy ship on fire. That means nothing. The burning gas from one big shell will make the deuce of a blaze. There is no explanation of our losses in the first part, and of Fritz's comparative immunity, except the one which you, my dear Gunner, are very unwilling to accept. Fritz hit us much more often than we hit him. There you have it. I have spoken." Admiral Salt Horse, a most abstemious man, rang the bell of the club of which we were members, and ordered a whisky and soda. "Just to take the taste of that admission out of my mouth," he explained.

The Maker of Ships and Guns smiled ruefully. "I have reckoned," said he, "that the Cats fired twenty rounds per gun during the first hour and the Queen Elizabeths ten. That makes 640 rounds of 13.5-inch shell and 320 rounds of 15-inch. Three per cent. of fair hits at the ranges, and in the conditions of light, would have been quite good. But did we score twenty-eight hits of big shell, or anything like it? If we had there would have been

much more damage done than one battle cruiser on fire. The Salt Horse has spoken, and so have I. I also will wash the taste of it out of my mouth."

"You will admit," muttered the Gunner, "that in the second part, after Beatty and the Queen Elizabeths had turned, our control officers and long-service gunners came into their own?"

"Willingly," cried Admiral Salt Horse. "Nothing could have been finer than the hammering which Evan-Thomas gave to the whole High Seas Fleet. And Beatty crumpled up his opposite numbers in first-class style. Our individual system, then, justified itself utterly. Fritz's mechanical control went to bits when the shells began to burst about his fat ears, but it was painfully good while it lasted. Give Fritz his due, Master Gunner, it's no use shutting our eyes to his merits."

I had listened with the keenest interest to this interchange, for though I should not myself have ventured to comment upon so technical a subject as naval gunnery, I had subconsciously felt what the old Salt Horse had so bluntly and almost brutally expressed.

"We have arrived, then, at this," observed I, slowly, "that during the first hour, up to the turn when the main High Seas Fleet joined up with Hipper's battle cruisers, our squadrons got the worst of it, though they were of twice Fritz's numbers and of far more than twice his strength. It is a beastly thing for an Englishman to say, but really you leave me no choice. Though I hate whisky, I must follow the example set by my betters."

The Master Gunner laughed. "In the Service," said he, "we learn from our mistakes. At the beginning we did badly on May 31st, but after-

wards we profited by the lesson. What more could you ask? . . . Civilians," said he, aside to his colleagues, "seem to think that only English ships should be allowed to have guns or to learn how to use them."

"Now we have given Fritz his due," said I, "let us get on to the second part of the battle, Act Two of the naval drama. You will agree that the handling of our damaged squadrons by Beatty and Evan-Thomas was magnificent, and that the execution done by us was fully up to the best English standards?"

"Yes," replied the grim Salt Horse, to whom I had specially appealed. "We will allow both. Beatty's combination of dash and caution was beyond praise and the gunnery was excellent."

"None of our ships were sunk, none were seriously hit," put in the Gunner. "On the other hand we certainly sank one German battle cruiser and one battleship, and very heavily damaged others. I don't know how many. I think that we must accept as proved that not many German ships of the battle line were sunk in any part of the action. When badly hit they fell out and retired towards home, which they could always do. During the second part both fleets were steaming away from the German bases, so that a damaged enemy ship had only to stop to be left behind in safety. A good many ships were claimed by our officers as sunk when they were known to have been damaged and had disappeared; but I feel sure that most of them had fallen out, not been sunk."

"The outstanding feature," cried the Maker of Guns, "was the superiority of our gunnery. We have always encouraged individuality in gun laying,

and have never allowed Fire Control to supersede the eyes and hands of the skilled gun-layers in the turrets. Control and individual laying are with us complementary, not mutually exclusive. With the Germans an intensely mechanical control is of the essence of their system. They are very good up to a point, but have not elasticity enough to deal with the perpetual variations of range and direction when fighting ships are moving fast and receiving heavy punishment. Fritz beat us in the first part, but we, as emphatically, beat him in the second."

We then passed to a technical discussion upon naval gunnery, which cannot be given here in detail. I developed my thesis, aggravating to expert gunners, that when one passes from the one dimension—distance—of land shooting from a fixed gun at a fixed object, to the two dimensions—distance and direction—of moving guns on board ship firing at moving objects, the drop in accuracy is so enormous as to make ship gunnery frightfully ineffective and wasteful. I readily admitted that when one passed still further to three dimensions—distance, direction, and height—and essayed air gunnery, the wastefulness and ineffectiveness of shooting at sea were multiplied an hundredfold. But, as I pointed out, we were not at the moment discussing anti-aircraft gunnery, but the shooting of naval guns at sea in the Jutland Battle.

Of course I brought down a storm upon my head. But my main thesis was not contested. It was, however, pointed out that I had not allowed sufficient weight to the inherent difficulties of shooting from a moving ship at a moving ship ten or a dozen miles away, and that instead of calling

naval gunnery "wasteful and ineffective" I ought to be dumb with wonder that hits were ever brought off at all. I enjoyed myself thoroughly.

"Don't be hard on the poor man," at last interposed the kindly Salt Horse. "He means well and can be useful to the Service sometimes though he has not had a naval training The truth is," he went on confidentially, "we feel rather wild about the small damage that we did to Fritz on May 31st: small, that is, in comparison with our opportunities. Our gunnery officers and gun-layers are the best in the world, our guns, range-finders and other instruments are unapproachable for precision, our system of fire direction is the best that naval brains can devise and is constantly being improved, and yet all through the war the result in effective hits has been most disappointing—don't interrupt, you people, I am speaking the truth for once. Fritz's shooting, except occasionally, has been even worse than ours, which indicates, I think, that the real inner problems of naval gunnery are not yet in sight of solution. You see, it is quite a new science. In the old days one usually fired point blank just as one might plug at a haystack, and the extreme range was not more than a mile and a half; but now that every fighting ship carries torpedo tubes we must keep out a very long way. I admit the apparent absurdity of the situation. Here on May 31st, two fleets were engaged off and on for six hours—most of the time more off than on—and the bag for Fritz was three big ships, and for us possibly four, by gun-fire. The torpedo practice was no better except when our destroyers got in really close. During all the third part of the action, when Scheer was fending us off with torpedo

attacks he hit only one battleship, the *Marlborough*, and she was able to continue in action afterwards and to go home under her own steam. Yet upon a measured range at a fixed mark a torpedo is good up to 11,000 yards, nearly six miles. In action, against moving ships, one cannot depend upon a mouldy hitting at over 500 yards, a quarter of a mile. If gunnery is wasteful and inefficient, what about torpedo practice in battle?"

"What is the solution?" I asked, greatly interested.

"Don't ask me!" replied the Salt Horse. "I knew something of gunnery once, but now I'm on the shelf. I myself would risk the mouldies and fight at close quarters—we have the legs of Fritz and could choose our own range—but in-fighting means tremendous risks, and the dear stupid old public would howl for my head if the corresponding losses followed. The tendency at present is towards longer and longer ranges, up to the extreme visible limits, and the longer the range the greater the waste and inefficiency. Ask the Gunner there, he is more up-to-date than I am."

The Master Gunner growled. He had listened to Admiral Salt Horse's homily with the gravest disapproval. He was a simple loyal soul; any criticism which seemed to question the supreme competence of his beloved Service was to him rank treachery. Yet he knew that the Salt Horse was as loyal a seaman as he was himself. It was not what was said which caused his troubled feelings—he would talk as freely himself before his colleagues—but that such things should be poured into the ears of a civilian! It was horrible!

"After the first hour, when our gunners had

settled down," said he gruffly, "their practice was exceedingly good. They hit when they could see, which was seldom. If the light had been even tolerable no German ship would have got back to port."

"I agree," cried the Maker of Guns and Ships. "We did as well as the light allowed. Fritz was all to pieces. The bad torpedo practice was Fritz's, not ours. The worst of the gunnery was his, too. We have lots to learn still—as you rightly say, naval gunnery is still in its infancy—but we have learned a lot more than anyone else has. That is the one thing which matters to me."

"Have we not reached another conclusion," I put in, diffidently, "namely, that big-ship actions must be indecisive unless the light be good and the sea space wide enough to allow of a fight to a finish? We can't bring Fritz to a final action in the lower part of the North Sea unless we can cut him off entirely from his avenues of escape. In the Atlantic, a thousand miles from land, we could destroy him to the last ship—if our magazines held enough of shell—but as he can choose the battle ground, and will not fight except near to his bases, we can shatter him and drive him helpless into port, but we cannot wipe him off the seas. Is that proved?"

'Yes," said the Gunner, who had recovered his usual serenity. "In my opinion that is proved absolutely."

"One talks rather loosely of envelopment," explained the Maker, "as if it were total instead of partial. The German Fleet was never enveloped or anything like it. What happened was this: As the Germans curved away in a spiral to the

south-west our line curved in with them, roughly parallel, also to the south-west, keeping always between Fritz and the land. We were partly between him and his bases, but he could and did escape by getting round the horn which threatened to cut him off."

"Could not Jellicoe," I asked, "have worked right round so as to draw a line across the mouths of the Elbe and Weser, and to cut Scheer completely off from the approaches to Wilhelmshaven?"

"Not without immense risk. He would have had to pass into mine fields and penetrate them all through the hours of darkness. He might have lost half his fleet. Our trouble has always been the extravagant risk involved by a close pursuit. When the Germans retire to their protected waters we must let them go. The Grant Fleet is too vital a force to be needlessly risked. When Jellicoe's final stroke failed, owing to the bad light and the German retirement, the battle was really over. Jellicoe's blow had spent itself on the air. The Germans were almost safe except from our torpedo attacks, which were delivered during the night with splendid dash and with considerable success. But that night battle was the queerest business. When the sun rose the enemy had vanished. Fritz says that we had vanished. I suppose, strictly speaking, that we had. At least we were out of his sight, though unintentionally. Touch had been lost and the enemy had got safely home, taking most of his damaged ships with him. Nothing remained for us to do except to return to our northern bases, recoal, and refit. The Jutland Battle was indecisive in one sense, crushingly decisive in another. It left the German Fleet undestroyed, but left it impotent

as a fighting force. Thereafter it sank into a mere guard for Fritz's submarine bases."

"And the gunnery in the third part?" I asked with a sly glance towards the Gunner. He rose at the bait.

"I do not doubt that, measured by the percentage of hits to rounds fired, Copplestone would call it wasteful and inefficient. But the Navy regards the gunnery in the third part as even better than in the second, as proving our superiority over the Germans. They were then at their worst while we were at our best; we rapidly improved under the test of battle, they as rapidly deteriorated. The facts are certain. The enemy ships were hit repeatedly both by our battleships and battle cruisers, several were seen to haul out of the line on fire, and at least one battleship was observed to sink. Throughout all the time—two hours—during which Jellicoe's main fleet was engaged his ships were scarcely touched; not a single man was killed, and three only were wounded. Is that not good enough for you?"

"You have forgotten the *Invincible*," remarked that candid critic whom I have called Salt Horse. "She took station at the head of Beatty's line at 6.21. Her distance from the enemy was then 8,000 yards. It was a gallant service, for Beatty needed support very badly, but by 6.55 the *Invincible* had been destroyed. The *Iron Duke* passed her floating bottom up. She must have been caught by the concentrated fire of several enemy ships. It was a piece of luck for Fritz; the last that he had. Apart from the downing of the *Invincible*, I agree that the third part of the battle showed our gunnery to be highly effective, and that of the

Germans to be almost wholly innocuous. It was his torpedoes we had then to fear, not his guns."

"During the third part," said the Maker, "the ranges were comparatively low, from 9,000 to 12,000 yards, but the visibility was so bad that damaged ships could always betake themselves out of sight and danger. I am disposed to think that most of Fritz's sorely damaged ships did get home —in the absence of evidence that they did not— for we never really closed in during the whole of the third part of the battle. Fritz was continually coming and going, appearing and disappearing. His destroyer attacks were well delivered, and though one battleship only was hit, our friend the *Marlborough*, we were kept pretty busy looking after ourselves. Jellicoe was like a heavy-weight boxer trying to get home upon a little man, skipping about just beyond his reach. We had the speed and the guns and the superiority of position, but we couldn't see. That is the explanation of the indecisiveness of the third part of the Jutland battle, that part which, with decent luck, would have ended Fritz's business. Our gunnery was then top-hole. Take the typical case of the flagship *Iron Duke*. She got a sight of a *Koenig* at 12,000 yards (seven miles), straddled her at once, and began to hit at the second salvo. That is real gunnery, not much waste about it either of time or shell. Then towards sunset the *Lion*, *Princess Royal*, and *New Zealand* engaged two battleships and two battle cruisers at 10,000 yards. Within eighteen minutes three of the Germans had been set on fire, two were listing heavily, and the three burning ones were only saved by becoming hidden in smoke and mist. That is the way to get on to a

target and to hold on. I agree with our old friend Salt Horse that the long ranges during the first part of the action, 18,000 to 20,000 yards—and even more for the Queen Elizabeths—are altogether too long for accuracy unless the conditions are perfect. The distances are well within the power of the big-calibre guns which we mount, but are out of harmony with the English naval spirit. We like to see our enemy distinctly and to get within real punishing distance of him. Compare our harmless performance during the first part with the beautiful whacking which we gave Fritz in the third whenever we could see him. The nearer we get to Fritz the better our gunners become and the more completely his system goes to bits. Which is just what one would expect. Our long-service gunners can lay by sight against any ships in the world and beat them to rags, but when it comes to blind laying directed from the spotting tops much of the advantage of individual nerve and training is lost. Like Salt Horse, I am all for in-fighting, at 10,000 yards or less, and believe that our gun-layers can simply smother Fritz if they are allowed to get him plainly on the wires of their sighting telescopes."

"There is not a petty officer gun-layer who wouldn't agree with you," remarked the Gunner thoughtfully, "but the young scientific Gunnery Lieutenants would shake their heads. For what would become of the beautiful fire-direction system which they have been building up for years past if we are to run in close and pound in the good old fashion? Ten thousand yards to a modern 15-inch gun is almost point blank."

"Our business is to sink the enemy in the shortest

possible time," cried Admiral Salt Horse, "and to fight in the fashion best suited to what Copplestone here rightly calls the Soul of the Navy. Long-range fighting is all very well when one can't do anything else—during a chase, for example—but when one can close in to a really effective distance, then, I say, close in and take the risks. In the Jutland Battle we lost two battle cruisers at long range and one only after the ranges had shortened. Fritz shot well at long range, but got worse and worse as we drew nearer to him, until at the end his gunnery simply did not count. Our ancestors had a similar problem to solve, and solved it at the Battle of the Saints in brutal fashion by breaking the French line and fighting at close quarters. There is a lot to be learned from the Jutland Battle, though it is not for an old dog like me to draw the lessons. But what does seem to shout at one is that the way to fight a German is to close in upon him and to knock the moral stuffing out of him. The destroyers always do it and so do our submarines. I am told that the way the destroyers charged battleships by night, and rounded up the enemy's light stuff by day, was a liberal education in naval psychology. We are at our best when the risks are greatest—it is the sporting instinct of the race that sustains us. But Fritz, who is no sportsman, and has a good deal more of imagination than our lower deck, cracks when the strain upon his nerves passes the critical point. Our young officers and men have no nerves; Fritz has more than is good for him; let us take advantage of his moral weakness and hustle him beyond the point when he cracks. He is a landsman artificially made into a seaman; our men are seamen born. In a battle-

ship action the personal factor tends to be overborne by the immensity of the fighting instruments, but it is there all the time and is the one thing which really counts. We give it full scope in the destroyers, submarines, and light cruisers; let us give it full scope in the big ships of the battle line. Let our MEN get at Fritz; don't seek to convert them into mere parts of a machine, give their individuality the fullest play; you need then have no fear lest their work should prove wasteful or ineffective."

The Master Gunner, a man ten years younger than old Salt Horse, smiled and said, "I am afraid that the gunnery problem has become too complicated to yield to your pleasing solution. A few years ago it would have been considered a futile waste of shell to fight at over 10,000 yards, but the growth in the size of our guns and in our methods of using them have made us at least as accurate at 20,000 yards as we used to be at 10,000. At from 9,000 to 12,000 in good light we are now terrific. All my sympathies are on your side; the Navy has always loved to draw more closely to the enemy, and maybe our instincts should be our guide. I can't say. If we could have a big-ship action every month the problem would soon be solved. Our trouble is that we don't get enough of the Real Thing. You may be very sure that if our officers and men were told to run in upon Fritz and to smash him, at the ranges which are now short, they would welcome the order with enthusiasm. The quality and training of our sea personnel is glorious, incomparable. I live in wonder at it."

"And so do I," cried the Maker, a man not ready to display enthusiasm. "One has lived with the professional Navy so long that one comes to take

its superb qualities for granted; one needs to see the English Navy in action to be aroused to its merits. On May 31st very few of those in Evan-Thomas's or Jellicoe's squadrons had been under fire—Beatty's men had, of course, more than once. If they showed any defect it was due to some slight over-eagerness. But this soon passed. In a big-ship action not one man in a hundred has any opportunity of personal distinction—which is an uncommonly good thing for the Navy. We have no use for pot-hunters and advertisers. We want every man to do his little bit, devotedly, perfectly, without any thought of attracting attention. Ours is team work. If men are saturated through and through with this spirit of common devotion to duty they sacrifice themselves as a matter of course when the call comes. More than once fire penetrated to the magazines of ships. The men who instantly rolled upon the blazing bags of cordite, and extinguished the flames with their bodies, did not wait for orders nor did they expect to be mentioned in dispatches. It was just their job. But what I did like was Jellicoe's special mention of his engineers. These men, upon whose faithful efficiency everything depends, who, buried in the bowels of ships, carry us into action and maintain us there, who are the first to die when a ship sinks and the last to be remembered in Honours lists, these men are of more real account than almost all those others of us who prance in our decorations upon the public stage. If the conning tower is the brain of a ship, the engine-room is its heart. When Jellicoe was speeding up to join Beatty and Evan-Thomas his whole fleet maintained a speed in excess of the trial speeds of some of the older vessels. Think what skilful

devotion this simple fact reveals, what minute attention day in day out for months and years, so that in the hour of need no mechanical gadget may fail of its duty. And as with Jellicoe's Fleet so all through the war. Whenever the engine-rooms have been tested up to breaking strain they have always, always, stood up to the test. I think less of the splendid work done by destroyer flotillas, by combatant officers and men in the big ships, by all those who have manned and directed the light cruisers. Their work was done within sight; that of the engine-rooms was hidden."

"I wish that the big public could hear you," I said, "the big public whose heart is always in the right place though its head is always damned ignorant and often damned silly."

The Maker of Guns and Ships turned on me, this calm, cold man whom I had thought a stranger to emotion. "And whose fault is that? You are a bit of an ass, Copplestone, and inconveniently inquisitive. But you can be useful sometimes. When you come to write of the war at sea, do not wrap yourself up in a tangle of strategy and tactics of which you know very little. Stick to the broad human issues. Reveal the men who fight rather than the ships which are fought with. Think of the Navy as a Service of flesh and blood and soul, no less than of brains and heart. If you will do this, and write as well as you know how to do, the public will not remain either damned ignorant or damned silly."

"I will do my best," said I, humbly.

EPILOGUE

LIEUTENANT CÆSAR

> Now in the names of all the gods at once,
> Upon what meat doth this our Cæsar feed,
> That he is grown so great?

WHEN the war is over and tens of thousands of young men, who have drunk deep of the wine of life, are thrown back upon ginger ale, what will be the effect upon their heads and stomachs? I do not know; I have no data, except in the one instance of my friend, Lieutenant Cæsar, R.N.V.R.

I must write of him with much delicacy and restraint, for his friendship is too rich a privilege to be imperilled. His sense of humour is dangerously subtle. Cæsar is twenty-three, and I am—well, fully twice his age—yet he bears himself as if he were infinitely my senior in years and experience. And he is right. What in all my toll of wasted years can be set beside those crowded twenty-two months of his, now ended and done with? The fire of his life glowed during those months with the white intensity of an electric arc; in a moment it went black when the current was cut off; he was left groping in the darkness for matches and tallow candles. I dare not sympathise with him openly, though I feel deeply, for he would laugh and call me a silly old buffer—a term which I dread above all others.

. . . .

The variegated career of Lieutenant Cæsar fills me with the deepest envy. When the war broke out he was a classical scholar at Oxford, one of the bright spirits of his year. His first in Greats, his prospects of the Ireland, his almost certain Fellowship—he threw them up. The Army had no interest for him, but to the Navy he was bound by links of family association. To the Navy therefore he turned, and prevailed upon a somewhat reluctant Admiralty to gazette him as a Sub-Lieutenant in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. "A classical scholar," argued Whitehall, "is about as much use to us as a ruddy poet. What can this young man do away from his books?" Cæsar rapidly marshalled his poor accomplishments. He could row—no use, we are in the steam and petrol age; he had been a sergeant of O.T.C.—no thanks, try the Royal Naval Division; he could drive a motor-car and was a tolerable engineer. At last some faint impression was made. Did he understand the engines of a motor-boat? It appeared that he did; was, in fact, a mildly enthusiastic member of the Royal Motor Boat Club at Southampton. "Now you're talking," said Whitehall. "Why didn't you say this at once instead of wasting our time over your useless frillings?" The official wheels stirred, and within two or three weeks Cæsar found himself gazetted, and dropped into a fine big motor patrol boat, which the Admiralty had commandeered and turned to the protection of battleships from submarines. At that time we had not a safe harbour anywhere except on the South Coast, where they did not happen to be wanted. For many months Cæsar patrolled by night and day deep cold harbours on the east

coast of Scotland, hunting periscopes. It was an arduous but exhilarating service. His immediate chief, a Lieutenant R.N.V.R., was a benevolent American, the late owner of the boat. He had handed her over without payment in return for a lieutenant's commission. "I was once," he declared, "a two-striper in Uncle Sam's Navy. I got too rich for my health, chucked the Service, and have been eating myself out of shape. Take the boat but, for God's sake, give me the job of running her. She's too pretty for your thumb-crushing blacksmiths to spoil." When reminded that he was an alien, he treated the objection as the thinnest of evasive pleas. "King George is my man; there are no diamonds in his garters," he wrote.

The Lords of the Admiralty, who never in their sheltered lives had read such letters as now poured in upon them, gasped, collapsed, and gave to the benevolent neutral all that he asked.

Cæsar worshipped the big motor-boat and her astonishing commander. His first love wrapped itself round the twin engines, two of them, six-cylinders each, 120 horse-power. They were ducks of engines which never gave any trouble, because Cæsar and the two American engineers—I had almost written nurses—were always on the watch to detect the least whimper of pain. But though he never neglected his beloved engines, the mysterious fascinations of the three-pounder gun in the bows gradually vanquished his mature heart. Her deft breech mechanism, her rapid loading, the sweet, kindly way she slipped to and fro in her cradle, became charms before which he succumbed utterly. Cæsar and the gun's high-priest,

a petty officer gun-layer, became the closest of friends, and the pair of them would spend hours daily cleaning and oiling their precious toy. The American lieutenant had his own bizarre notions of discipline—he thought nothing of addressing the petty officer as "old horse"; but he worked as hard as Cæsar himself, kept everyone in the best of spirits through the vilest spells of weather, and was a perpetual fount of ingenious plans for the undoing of Fritz. The *Mighty Buzzer*—named from her throbbing exhaust—was a happy ship.

The *Buzzer's* career as a king's ship was brief, and her death glorious. One night, or rather early morning, she was far out in the misty jaws of a Highland loch, within which temporarily rested many great battle-cruisers. Cæsar despised these vast and potent vessels. "What use are they?" he would ask of his chief. "There is nothing for them to fight, and they would all have been sunk long ago but for US." Fast motor-boats, with 120 horse-power engines, twenty-five knots of speed—thirty at a pinch, untruthfully claimed the Lieutenant—and beautiful 3-pounder guns were in Cæsar's view, the last word in naval equipment. The Lieutenant would shake his head gravely at his Sub's exuberant ignorance. "They are gay old guys just now," he would reply, "and feeling pretty cheap. But some day they will get busy and knock spots off Fritz's hide. You Britishers are darned slow, but when you do fetch a gun it's time to shin up trees. The Germs have stirred up the British Lion real proper and, I guess, wish now they'd let him stay asleep."

The *Buzzer* had chased many a German submarine, compelling it to dive deeply and become

harmless, but never yet had Cæsar been privileged to see one close. Upon this misty morning of her demise, when he gained fame, she was farther out to sea than usual, and was cruising at about the spot where enterprising U-boats were wont to come up to take a bearing. I am writing of the days before our harbour defences had chilled their enterprise into inanition. Cæsar was on watch, and stood at the wheel amidships. The petty officer and a blue-jacket were stationed at the gun forward. Our friend's senses were very much alert, for he took his duties with the utmost seriousness. Near his boat the sea heaved and swirled, and as he saw a queer wave pile up he became, if possible, even more alert and called to his watch to stand by. The sea went on swirling, the surface broke suddenly, and up swooped the hood and thin tube of a periscope. It was less than fifty yards away, and for a moment the lenses did not include the *Buzzer* within their field of vision. For Cæsar, his watch on deck, and the sleepers below, the next few seconds were packed with incident. Round came the *Buzzer* pointing straight for the periscope, the exhaust roared as Cæsar called for full speed, and the gun crashed out. Away went periscope and tube, wiped off by the spreading cone of the explosion, as if they were no more substantial than a bullrush, and up shot the *Buzzer's* bows as Cæsar drove her keel violently upon the top of the conning tower of the rising U-boat. Keel and conning-tower ripped together; there was a tremendous rush of air-bubbles, followed by oil, and the U-boat was no more. She had gone, and the *Buzzer*, with six feet of her tender bottom torn off, was in the act to follow. As she cocked up her stern to dive after

her prey there was just time to get officers and crew into lifebelts and to signal for help. Cæsar met in the water his commanding officer, who, though nearly hurled through his cabin walls by the shock, and entirely ignorant of the cataclysm in which he had been involved, was cheerful as ever. "Sakes," he gasped, when he had cleared mouth and nose of salt water, "when you Britishers do get busy, things—sort of—hum."

A destroyer rushing down picked up the swimmers and heard their story. The evidence was considered sufficient, for oil still spread over the sea, and there were no rocks within miles to have ripped out the *Buzzer's* keel, so another U-boat was credited to the Royal Navy and Cæsar became a lieutenant. It was a proud day for him.

But he had lost his ship, and was for a time out of a job. The new harbour defences were under way and fast motor-boars were for a while less in demand. The Admiralty solved the problem of his future. "This young man," it observed, "is nothing better than a temporary lieutenant of the Volunteer Reserve, but he is not wholly without intelligence and has a pretty hand with a gun. We will teach him something useful." So the order was issued that Lieutenant Cæsar should proceed to Whale Island, there to be instructed in the mysteries of naval gunnery. "You will have to work at Whale Island," warned the captain of his flotilla, "and don't you forget it. It is not like Oxford." This to reduce Cæsar to the proper level of humility.

Up to this stage in his career Lieutenant Cæsar, though temporarily serving in the Royal Navy, knew nothing whatever about it. His status was

defined for me once by a sergeant of Marines: "A temporary gentleman, sir, 'ere to-day and gone to-morrow, and good riddance, sir." Upon land the corps and regiments have been swamped by temporaries, but at sea the Regular Navy remains in full possession. In the barracks at Whale Island, where Cæsar was assigned quarters, he felt like a very small schoolboy newly joining a very large school. His fellow-pupils were R.N.R. men, mercantile brass-bounders with mates' and masters' certificates, and R.N.V.R.'s drawn from diverse classes. To him they seemed a queer lot. He lay low and studied them, finding most of them wholly ignorant of everything which he knew, but profoundly versed in things which he didn't. The instructors of the Regular Service gave him his first definite contact with the Navy. "My original impression of them," he told me, laughing, "was that they were all mad. I had come to learn gunnery, but for a whole week they insisted upon teaching me squad drill, about the most derisory version of drill which I have ever seen. Picture us, a mob of mates out of liners and volunteers out of workshops and technical schools, trailing rifles round the square at Whale Island, feeling dazed and helpless, and wondering if we had brought up by mistake at a lunatic asylum. After the first week, during which Whale Island indulged its pathetic belief that its true *métier* is squad drill, we were all right. We got busy at the guns, and found plenty to learn." It was at Whale Island that he received the name of Cæsar, the one Latin author of which his messmates had any recollection. During the first month of his training he daily cursed Winchester and Oxford for the frightful gaps

which they had left in his educational equipment. He could acquire languages with anyone, but mathematics, that essential key to the mysteries of gunnery, gave him endless trouble. But he had a keenly tempered brain and limitless persistence. Slowly at first, more rapidly later, he made up on his contemporaries, and when after two months of the toughest work of his life he gained a first-class certificate, he felt that at last he had tasted a real success.

Time brings its revenges. As a Sub in a motor-boat he had affected to think slightingly of the great battle-cruisers which his small craft protected, but now that he was transferred to one of the new Cats of the First Battle Cruiser Squadron his views violently changed. Battleships were all very well, they had huge guns and tremendous armour, but when it came to speed and persistent aggressiveness what were these sea monsters in comparison with the Cats? Why nothing, of course. Which shows that Cæsar was becoming a Navyman. Put a naval officer into the veriest tub which can keep herself afloat with difficulty, and steam five knots in a tideway, and he will exalt her into the most efficient craft beneath the White Ensign. For she is His Ship.

Lieutenant Cæsar very quickly became at one with his new ship, and entered into his kingdom. Whether upon the loading platform of a turret or in control of a side battery, he serenely took up his place and felt that he had expanded to fill it adequately. His tone became obtrusively professional. When I asked for some details of his hardships and his thrills, he sneered at me most rudely. "There are no hardships," he declared;

"we live and grow fat, and there is not a thrill to the whole war. My motor-boat was a desperate buccaneer in comparison with these stately Founts of Power. Every week or two we do a Silent Might parade in the North Sea, but nothing ever happens." This was after the Dogger Bank action for which he was too late, and before the Jutland Battle. He wrote to me many veiled accounts of the North Sea stunts upon which the battle-cruisers were persistently engaged, but always insisted that they were void of excitement.

"Dismiss from your landsman's mind," he would write—Cæsar was now a sailor among sailors—"all idea of thrills. There aren't any. When the hoist Prepare to Leave Harbour goes up on the flagship, and black smoke begins to pour from every funnel in the Squadron, there is no excitement and no preparation—for we are already fully prepared. We go out with our attendant destroyers and light cruisers and scour at will over the 'German Ocean' looking for Fritz, that we may fall upon him. But he is too cunning for us. I wish that we had some scouting airships."

This wish of Lieutenant Cæsar is, I believe, shared by every officer in the Grand Fleet from the Commander-in-Chief downwards. Airships cannot fight airships or sea ships, and are of very little use as destructive agents, but they are bright gems in the firmament of scouts.

I asked Cæsar why he did not keep notes of his manifold experiences. "It is against orders," answered he sorrowfully. "We are not allowed to keep a diary, and I have a rotten memory for

those intimate details which give life to a story. If I could keep notes I would set up in business as a naval Boyd Cable." But I am afraid that Cæsar was reckoning without the Naval Censor, a savage, hungry lion beside whom his brother of the Military Department is a complacent lamb. Cæsar has a pretty pen, but his hands are in shackles.

Cæsar bent his keen eyes upon those with whom he was associated, studied their strength and weakness, and delivered judgment, intolerant in its youthful sureness.

"The young lieutenants," he wrote, "are wonderful. Profoundly and serenely competent at their own work, but irresponsible as children in everything else. Their ideas of chaff and ragging never arise above those of the fifth form. Whenever they speak of the Empire they mean the one in Leicester Square. Shore leave for them means a bust at the Trocadero, with a music-hall to follow, preferably with a pretty girl. Their notions of shore life are of the earth earthy, not to say fleshy, but at sea work they approach the divine. There is not a two-striper in my wardroom who could not with complete confidence and complete competence take the Grand Fleet into action. But of education, as you or I understand the word, they have none. The Navy has been their strictly intensive life since they left school at about thirteen. Of art, or literature, or music—except in the crudest forms—they know nothing, and care nothing. And this makes their early retirement the more tragical. They go out, nine-tenths of them, before they reach forty without mental or artistic resources. The Navy is a remorseless user up of youth. Those who remain afloat, especially those without com-

batant responsibilities, tend to degenerate into S.O.B.s."

I will not translate; Cæsar is too young and too clever to be sympathetic towards those of middle age.

One afternoon in spring Lieutenant Cæsar was plunged without warning into the Jutland Battle. He and his like were placidly waiting at action stations in their turrets, when the order came to put live shell into the guns. For six hours he remained in his turret, serving his two 13.5-inch guns, but seeing nothing of what passed outside his thick steel walls. When I implored him to recount to me his experiences, he protested that he had none.

"You might as well ask a sardine, hermetically sealed in a tin, to describe a fire in a grocer's shop," wrote he. "I was that sardine, and so were nearly all of us. Those in the conning tower saw something, and so did the officers in the spotting top when they were not being smothered by smoke and by water thrown up by bursting shells. But as for the rest of us—don't you believe the stories told you by eye-witnesses of naval battles. They are all second or third hand, and rubbish at that. When I have sorted the thing out from all those who did see, and collated the discrepant accounts, I will give you my conclusions, but I shall not be allowed to write them. For a literary man the Navy is a rotten service."

Cæsar at this time wrote rather crossly. He had, I think, visualised himself as the writer some day of an immortal story of the greatest naval battle in

history. Now that he had been through it, he knew as little of it at first hand as a heavy gunner in France does of the advancing infantry whose path forward he is cutting out.

The isolation of a busy turret in action may be realised when one learns that Cæsar knew nothing of the loss of the *Queen Mary*, *Indefatigable*, or *Invincible* until hours after they had gone to the bottom. He had heard nothing even of damage suffered by his own ship until, a grimy figure in frowsy overalls, he crawled through the roof of his big sardine tin and met in the darkness one of his friends who had been in the spotting top.

"There was a frightful row going on as we sat there on the turret's roof," wrote Cæsar to me. "Our destroyers were charging in upon Fritz's flying ships, which with searchlights and guns of all calibres were seeking to defend themselves. We could not fire for our destroyers were in the way. The horizon flamed like the aurora borealis, and now and then big shells, ricochetting, would scream over us. I enjoyed myself fine, and had no wish to seek safety in my turret, of which I was heartily sick. That is the only part of the action which I saw, and the details were buried in confusion and darkness. All the rest of the day I had been serving two hungry guns with shells and cordite, and firing them into unknown space. I was too intent on my duties to be bored, but I did not get the least bit of a thrill until I climbed out on the roof. Still I am glad to have been in the Battle, and, I love my big wise guns."

It was while his battle-cruiser was being refitted,

and when he had just returned from a few days' leave, that the wheel of his destiny made another turn. He was howked struggling and kicking out of his turret as one plucks a periwinkle from its shell, and cast into a destroyer attached to the North Sea patrol. He had, as I have told, an easy knack of picking up languages. To a solid knowledge of German he had added in past vacations more than a speaking acquaintance with the Scandinavian tongues—Norse, Danish, and Swedish—and his industry was now turned to his undoing. Naval gunners were more plentiful than boarding officers who could converse with the benevolent and unbenevolent neutral, and Cæsar's unfortunate accomplishments clearly indicated him for a new job. At first he was furious, but became quickly reconciled. For, as he argued, fighting on a grand scale is over, Fritz has had such a gruelling that he won't come out any more; North Sea stunts will seem very tame after that day out by the Jutland coast; patrolling the upper waters of the North Sea cannot be quite dull, and cross-examining Scandinavian pirates may become positively exciting. So Cæsar settled down in his destroyer, in so far as any one can settle down in such an uneasy craft.

Cæsar now formed part of the inner and closer meshes of the North Sea blockade designed to intercept those ships which had penetrated the more widely spread net outside. Many of the masters whom he interviewed claimed to have a British safe-conduct, but Cæsar was not to be bluffed. With a rough and chocolate-hued skin he had acquired the peremptory air of a Sea God.

"It is rather good fun sometimes," he wrote to

me. "We can't search big ships on the high seas at all thoroughly, and we don't want to send them all into port for examination, so we work a Black List. I have a list from the War Trade Department of firms which are not allowed to ship to neutral countries, and of all suspected enemy agents in those countries. The Norse, Danish and Dutch skippers are very decent and do their best to help, but the Swedes are horrid blighters. Whenever there is any doubt at all we send ships into port to be thoroughly examined there. You may take it that not much gets through now. Next to a complete blockade of all sea traffic for neutral ports—which I don't suppose the politicians can stomach—our Black List system seems to be the goods. I get good fun with these merchant skippers, and am becoming quite a linguist, but the work is less exciting that I had hoped. It is amusing to see a 7,000-ton tramp escorted into port by a twenty-foot motor-boat which she could sling up on her davits, but even this sight becomes a matter of course after a while. I have seen something of war from three aspects, and seem to have exhausted its sensations. They are greatly overrated."

But Lieutenant Cæsar was destined to have one more experience before war had used him up and relaid him upon the shelf from which he was plucked in September, 1914. A destroyer upon patrol duty is still a fighting vessel, and fights joyfully whenever she can snatch a plausible opportunity. Cæsar had sunk a submarine, served through the Jutland Battle, and assisted to stop the holes in the British blockade, but he had not yet known what fighting really means. That is reserved

for destroyers in action. One afternoon he was cruising not far from the Dogger Bank, when the sound of light guns was heard a few miles off towards the east. The Lieut.-Commander in charge of our unit in H.M.S. *Blockade* obeyed the Napoleonic rule and steered at once for the guns. In about ten minutes a group of small craft wreathed in smoke, lighted up at short intervals by gun flashes, appeared on the horizon, and roaring at her full speed of 34 knots the British destroyer swept down upon them. Presently seven trawlers were made out firing with their small guns at two German torpedo boats, which with torpedo and 23-pounder weapons were intent upon destroying them. One trawler was blown sky-high while Cæsar's ship was yet half a mile distant, and another rolled over shattered by German shell. "It was a pretty sight," said Cæsar, when I visited him in hospital, and learned to my deep joy that he was out of danger. "When we got within a quarter of a mile we edged to starboard to give the torpedo tubes a clear bearing on the port bow. A shell or two flew over us, but the layers at the tubes took no notice. They waited till we were quite close, not more than two hundred yards, and then loosed a torpedo. I have never seen anything so quick and smart. I saw the mouldy drop and start, and then a huge column of water spouted up, blotting out entirely the nearest German boat. The water fell and set us tossing wildly, but I kept my feet and could see that German destroyer shut up exactly like a clasp-knife. She had been bust up amidships, her bow and stern almost kissed one another, and she went down vertically. The other turned to fly, firing heavily upon us, but our boys had her

in their grip. We had three fine guns, 4-inch semi-automatics. We hit her full on the starboard quarter as she turned, and then raked her the whole length of her deck. I did not see the end, for earth and sky crashed all round me, and I went to sleep. When I awoke I was lying below, my right leg felt dead, but there was no pain, and from the horrid vibration running through the vessel I knew that we were at full speed.

"'Did we get the other one?' I asked of my servant, whom I saw beside me. 'She sunk proper, sir,' said he. 'You, sir, are the only casuality we 'ad.' It was an honour which I found it difficult to appreciate. 'What's the damage?' I muttered. 'I'm afraid, sir,' he replied diffidently, 'that your right leg is blowed away.' Then I fainted, and did not come round again till I was in hospital here. My leg is gone at the knee; I lost a lot of blood, and should have lost my life but for the tourniquet which the Owner himself whipped round my thigh. They have whittled the stump shipshape here, and I am to have a new leg of the most fashionable design. The doctors say that I shall not know the difference when I get used to it, and shall be able to play golf and even tennis. Golf and tennis! Good games, but they seem a bit tame after the life I've led for the last two years." Cæsar fell silent, and I gripped his hand.

"It isn't as if you were in the Regular Service," I murmured. "It isn't your career that's gone. That is still to come. You've done your bit, Cæsar, old man."

His eyes glittered and a tear welled over and rolled down his cheek. That was all, the only sign

of weakness and of regret for the lost leg and the lost opportunities for further service. When he spoke again it was the old cheerful Cæsar whom I knew. "It seems funny. A month or two hence I shall be back at Oxford, reading philosophy and all sorts of absurd rubbish for my First in Greats. From Oxford I came, and to Oxford I shall return; these two years of life will seem like a dream. A few years hence I shall have nothing but my medal and my wooden leg to remind me of them. It has been a good time, Copplestone—a devilish good time. I have done my bit, but I wasn't cut out for a fighting man. There is too much preparation and too little real business. I should have exhausted the thing and got bored. In time I should have become an S.O.B. like some of those others. No, Copplestone, I have nothing to regret, not even the lost leg. It is better to go out like this than to wait till the end of the war, and then to be among the Not Wanteds."

"They've made you a Lieutenant-Commander," I said slowly.

"Two and a half stripes," he murmured. "They look pretty, but they are only the wavy ones, not the real article. I was never anything but a 'tempory blighter, 'ere to-day and gone to-morrow, and good riddance.' It was decent of them to think of me, but stripes are no use to me now. I shall be at Oxford with the other cripples, and the weak hearts, and the aliens, and the conscientious objectors—what do the dregs of Oxford know of stripes?"

. . . . .

I saw as much as I could of Cæsar during the

weeks that followed. His mental processes interested me hugely. He has an enviable faculty of concentrating upon the job in hand to the complete exclusion of everything outside. He forgot Oxford in the Service, and now seemed to have almost forgotten the Service in his return to Oxford, and to what he calls civilisation. He was greatly taken up with the design for his wooden leg. I met him after his first visit to Roehampton to be measured, and found him bubbling over with enthusiasm. "Such legs and arms!" cried he. "They are almost better than meat and bone ones. I saw a Tommy with a shorter stump than mine jumping hurdles and learning to kick. He was a professional footballer once. Another with a wooden arm could write and even draw. In a month or two's time, when my stump is healed solid and I have learnt the tricks of my new leg, it will be a great sport exercising it and trying to find out what it can't do. A new interest in life."

"You seem rather to like having a leg blown off," I said, wondering.

He is extraordinarily exuberant. I looked for depression after a month in hospital, but looked in vain. He builds up a future with as much zest as a youthful architect executes his first commission. The First in Greats is "off"; Cæsar says that he has not time to bother about such things. "I shall read History and modern French and Russian literature. History will do for my Final Schools, and Literature for my play. I shall learn Russian. Then when I have taken my degree I shall go in for the Foreign Office. My wooden leg will actually help me to a nomination, and the exam. is nothing. It's not a bad idea; I thought of it last night."

"You don't take long over a decision," I remarked.

"I never did," said he calmly.

When he returned to Oxford early in November he urged me to pay him a visit. I was in London a week or two later and having twenty-four hours to spare ran up to Oxford, established myself at the Clarendon, and summoned Cæsar to dine with me. All through the meal wonder grew upon me. For my very charming guest was an undergraduate in his fourth year, bearing no trace of having been anything else. We talked of Balzac, Anatole France, and Turgeniev. I listened politely to Cæsar's views upon German and Russian Church music. I learned that the scarcity of Turkish cigarettes was causing him distress, that his rooms were delightful, and that Oxford was a desert swept clear of his old friends. The war was never once referred to. His conversation abounded in slang with which I was not familiar—I come from the other shop. It was an insufferable evening, and I saw Cæsar hobble away upon his crutches with positive relief. He could use his leg a little, but the stump was still rather sore. That hobble was the one natural and human thing about him.

I passed a wretched night, came to a desperate resolution early in the morning, and carried it out about nine o'clock. Cæsar was in his "delightful rooms." They certainly had a pleasant aspect, but the furniture disgusted me; it might have been selected by a late-Victorian poet. I looked for a book or a picture which might connect Cæsar with the R.N.V.R., and looked in vain. He was busy trampling upon the best two years of his life and forgetting that he had ever been a man. It should

not be. Presently he came in from his bedroom and began to talk in the manner of the night before but I cut him short. "Cæsar," I said brutally, "you are no better than an ass. Look at these rooms. Is this the place for a man who has lived and fought in a motor-boat, a battle-cruiser, and a T.B.D.? You have sunk a German submarine, served in the Jutland Battle, and lost a leg in your country's service. Hug these things to your soul, don't throw them away. Brood upon them, write about them, for the love of Heaven don't try to forget them."

I saw his eyes light up, but he said nothing. His lips began to twitch and, knowing him as I did, I should have heeded their warning. But unchecked I drivelled on:

"Are you the man to shrink from an effort because of pain? Did you grouse when your leg was blown off? Wring all you can out of the future. Read History, join the F.O., study Russian. But do these things in a manner worthy of Lieutenant-Commander Cæsar, and don't try to revive the puling Oxford spark that you were two years ago before the war came to sweep the rubbish out of you."

He gave a clumsy leap, tripped over his new leg, and fell into a chair. Lying there he laughed and laughed and laughed. How he laughed! Not loud, but deeply, thoroughly, persistently, as if to make up for a long abstinence.

"Confound you!" I growled. "What the deuce are you laughing at?"

"You," said Cæsar simply.

At the word the truth surged over me in a shameful flood. That preposterous dinner with

its babble of Balzac and Turgeniev, Church music, and Turkish cigarettes. These rooms stripped of all reminders of two strenuous years of war. That Oxford accent and the intolerable Oxford slang. "Cæsar," I shouted, joining in his exuberant laughter, "you have been pulling my leg all the time."

"All the time," said he. "My bedroom is full of stuff that I cleared out of here. Last night, Copplestone, your ever-lengthening face was a lovely study, and I have wondered ever since how I kept in my laughter."

"You young villain," cried I, overjoyed to find that Cæsar was still my bright friend of the R.N.V.R. "How shall I ever get even with you?"

"I owe you some reparation," said he, "and here it is." He hobbled over to his desk and drew out a great roll of paper. "This is the first instalment; there are lots more to come. For the last month I have been trying to remember, not to forget. I am writing of everything that I have done and seen and heard and felt during those two splendid years. Everything. It will run to reams of paper and months of time. When it is finished you shall have it all. Take it, saturate yourself in it, add your spells to it. We will stir up the compound of Copplestone and Cæsar until it ferments, and then distil from the mass a Great Work. It shall be ours, Copplestone—yours and mine. Will you have me as your partner."

"With the greatest pleasure in life," I cried.

We discussed our plans in full detail, and parted the best of friends. Cæsar is rekindling the ashes of a life which I had thought to be extinguished; soon there will be a great and glowing fire of realised

memory which will keep warm the years that are to come. He has solved the problem of his immediate future. But what of those others, those tens of thousands, who when the war is over will seek for some means to keep alive the fires which years of war have lighted in their hearts? Are they to be merged, lost, in the old life as it was lived before 1914? Are they to degenerate slowly but surely into S.O.B.s, intent only upon earning a living somehow, playing bad golf, or looking on at football matches? I do not know, I have no data, and it is rather painful to indulge oneself in speculation.

. . . . . .

This sketch was published a year ago. Two months after I had visited Cæsar at Oxford he called upon me in London. He was in uniform, and explained that he had quickly grown tired of sick leave and had recalled himself to Service. "I can't go to sea again," said he, "with this timber toe, but I am at least good for an office job ashore." But Cæsar was not made to fit the stool of any office, and when I last heard from him was an observer in the R.N.A.S.

In this fashion he has rounded off his experiences, and basely failed me, his friend and biographer, of the scanty data with which to answer the question set forth in the first sentence of this chapter.

THE END

57

D
581
.K73

Accession No. 14846 Call No.

Author Kitchin, F. H.

41

Title The silent watchers.

DEMCO-211-D

BORROWER'S NAME	DATE DUE	DATE RET'D
Tedmyer	DEC 21'45	
Shelved in Basement		

14846

D
581
.K73